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[A MODERN SORCERESS.]

## VIOLA HARCOURT; OR, PLAYING WITH HEARTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Evander," "Tempting Fortune," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER VIII.

LADY CLEMENTINA.

Cease then to gaze with looks of love  
Bid her adieu, the venal fair  
Unworthy, she your bliss to prove,  
Then wherefore should she prove your care?

VIOLA had some of the talent of the actresses about her, and all that she possessed she called to her aid, for she had to make Sandford Newton think that he was not indifferent in her eyes, when she hated the sight of him and loved another all the while.

Viola had played with one heart, and it cut her to the quick. Now she had to play with another, and she thought it would give her some amusement—at least, it would not pain her.

Dr. Newton had two reasons for exacting the promise to marry his son from Viola. In the first place Sandford had fallen madly in love with her. He told his father that he could not be happy without her. Never had he seen a girl who had made such an impression on his mind. Secondly, she would come into a large

property, which would be a very nice thing for Sandford, and was well worth trying for.

She was not left alone long, for Sandford only waited for his rival to go to urge his own suit. He entered the room a little embarrassed, but the knowledge that his father had broken the ice emboldened him to address her.

"Miss Harcourt," he exclaimed, "I believe that I am not wrong in supposing that my father has spoken to you on a tender subject which is occupying my mind at the present moment."

"I have been spoken to," she replied.

"Then you know that I love you passionately and devotedly. Without you life will be a void. May I hope?"

"Yes," she said. "While there is life there, is always hope."

"Thank you for that. Of course, I cannot expect you to love me all at once. Allow me to pay my addresses to you, and I think in time you will come to like me. Only say that you will marry nobody else."

"That is asking too much," said Viola; "I cannot promise that. I will look upon you as one of my lovers, and if I can conscientiously marry you I will."

"Is that all you can say?"

"All at present."

"I may take you to balls, parties and theatres. In fact you will give me the preference over all others, just as if we were engaged, and you will try to forget Conyers?"

"Yes, I will try," she rejoined, knowing very well that the effort would be useless.

He was satisfied with this, indeed, it was as much as he could expect, and he continued to converse with her until Lady Clementina Sutton was announced. The doctor had been to see

her and acquainted her with all the facts of the case, which interested her greatly. She had for a long time been on unfriendly terms with her brother, Lord Tarlington, and was glad of the chance of injuring him.

In no way could this be done so well as to establish Viola's claim, and the doctor justly considered that it would be a great step gained if her ladyship recognised Viola and took her under her protection.

Lady Clementina was nearly forty years of age. She had been a great beauty in her time, and still preserved traces of her former loveliness, though age will tell. Many were the suitors she had had for her hand, but a disappointment in early life had determined her to remain single, which she had done, proving faithful to her first and only love. She was tall and slightly corpulent, dressed in perfect taste, regardless of expense, all her dresses coming from the first houses in Paris.

"This is the young lady of whom I spoke to your ladyship," said Dr. Newton, introducing Lady Clementina to Viola, who rose and extended her hand.

"My dear niece," replied her ladyship, "I am delighted to make your acquaintance, and hope we shall always be good friends. The dear doctor has told me all your extraordinary story, and I am glad that he is striving to make amends for the wrong he has done you."

"I am entirely in his hands and yours, dear aunt," answered Viola.

Her ladyship looked critically at her, seeming satisfied with the inspection.

"You are a sweetly pretty girl," she exclaimed, "and I am sure you are as good as you are pretty. I know we shall like one another,

and I ask you to come and live with me until we establish your rights, which I am confident we shall be able to do, though my brother, Lord Tarlington, is a bad man, and will give us all the trouble he can."

"Right will triumph over wrong," remarked Dr. Newton.

"I have a firm belief in that saying," replied Lady Clementina. "Kiss me, child. Do you think you can love me?"

"Who could help loving you?" answered Viola; "you are so kind and fascinating. It is very good of you to take me by the hand in this way, and you shall not find me ungrateful."

"You shall come home with me at once; my carriage is at the door. I give a little dance to-night. Shall we have the pleasure of your company, Sandford?"

The young man bowed and declared that he should have much pleasure in being present. The doctor expressed his intention of visiting his lawyers, who would immediately commence a suit against Lord Tarlington for the restoration of the property to Viola. The latter wrote a letter to Lucy telling her of her good fortune, and then she was driven in the carriage to her lordship's mansion in Mayfair.

It was indeed a turn of fortune's wheel, for from the lowest position she had been raised to the highest. Her head was in a whirl; she could scarcely believe in the reality of her luck. Was fortune only trifling with her? Had the cup of joy been raised to her lips only to be dashed away before she had time to sip its contents? She would not think it, yet there was much to be done before she got the property. Lord Tarlington was a determined and wicked man, and after all there is nothing so likely to happen as the unexpected.

## CHAPTER IX.

### LORD TARLINGTON PREPARES FOR WAR.

How have I sinned that this affliction  
Should light so heavy on me?

THOMAS.

It was with the deepest anxiety that Lord Tarlington waited for Dr. Newton to commence the campaign against him. When at last the lawyer's letter arrived threatening him with proceedings at law if he did not at once give up his property in favour of Viola, he felt that the first blow had come.

He was not a man to sit still. Of an active and bold disposition, he resolved to do everything in his power to foil the doctor. On the principle of two heads being better than one, and three better than two, he sent for his own lawyer and his brother. The lawyer, Mr. Snap, was justly regarded as one of the best in the City of London; he was very fertile in resources. On his advice any client might be content to rely. His brother, the Hon. Fitzharding Sutton, was a few years his junior; a man about town; a good rider, an excellent billiard player, and not by any means an idiot.

The two gentlemen arrived within a few minutes of each other wondering what they had been sent for, but seeing from Lord Tarlington's grave expression of countenance that something serious had happened. After the first greeting was over his lordship handed Mr. Snap the letter, desiring him to read it aloud, which he did.

"This is very grave," said Fitzharding Sutton, "if there is any truth in it; and I should think that our sister Clementina and Dr. Newton would not embark in such an enterprise unless they had some foundation to work upon."

Mr. Snap looked very wise.

"That is just the question," he remarked.

"Before we go any further, my lord, tell us if the charge is true and then we shall know what we have to meet."

Lord Tarlington struggled with himself for a moment, and then determined that it would be best to act candidly.

"It is true," he replied.

Fitzharding Sutton stared at his brother in great surprise.

"Don't look at me as if I was already a condemned criminal," continued his lordship. "I had the child taken away, and I believe that Dr. Newton has her under his thumb now. In fact, the girl at Clementina's is our niece and entitled to the property. I did it to get the money, and you are as much interested in the matter, Fitz, as I am, for I'll make you a handsome allowance, and you will have it all at my death."

"The prospect of your dying is remote, and cannot enter into my calculations," replied Fitzharding Sutton. "But the allowance is something tangible, and I should not like to lose it. We must fight Newton. What made him unearth this old scent?"

"I offended him by striking his son at the club a few nights ago. He wanted a written apology, which I would not give him, and this is his revenge. Now you know all. What are we to do?"

There was a long pause, during which everyone was thinking. Mr. Snap was the first to speak.

"We can indict the doctor and the girl for conspiracy to defraud," he exclaimed, "and they will find it hard to get out of the scrape. Of course I shall write to their lawyers strenuously denying everything."

"Humph! That is not a bad idea," said his lordship. "But the thing will get into the papers, and we may lose after all."

"If I may venture to suggest," remarked Fitzharding, "I should say get hold of the girl. Newton can do nothing without her, and if we take her away, keeping her out of sight, the whole affair will die a natural death, and no one will hear anything about it."

Mr. Snap rubbed his hands together gleefully.

"In a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom," he cried; "and I frankly admit that Mr. Sutton's plan is better than mine. Get the girl into our power, and we are safe as long as we hold her."

"Yes," answered Lord Tarlington; "Fitzharding has solved the difficulty."

"And if you will place funds at my disposal I will see the plan executed. Leave it to me to carry her off, and I swear that the keenest detective shall never find her."

"You shall have a blank cheque to fill up as you like. Where will you place her?"

"Leave that to me," answered Fitzharding Sutton, mysteriously.

After this the two remained talking for some time, and they parted mutually satisfied with each other, confident that the Gordian knot had been cut. Lord Tarlington slept soundly that night, for he no longer feared Dr. Newton.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CLAIRVOYANT.

And there she stood, so calm and pale  
That, but her breathing did not fail  
And neither sense nor pulse she lacks,  
You must have thought a form of wax  
Wrought to the very life was there.

MARION.

PERHAPS it is not generally known that in all large cities there are people who gain a livelihood by dealing with the supernatural. They do not, like the Witch of Endor, raise bodies from the grave, but they tell fortunes and convey messages from departed spirits. The fortune-tellers are the most common, but even they drive a good trade, while the mediums are always busy.

The highest in rank are the clairvoyants and mesmerists, whose power over certain dispositions is wonderful. So long as people are superstitious, so long will the professional soothsayers flourish. Nor is it among the poor and ignorant that they find their patrons. The rich, the cultured, the titled, flock to their stances, anxious to pry into the future.

The most fashionable clairvoyant in London a few years ago was Madame Menzies, who occupied a house in the aristocratic neighbourhood of Brook Street, Grosvenor Square. So large

was her fees, that only the wealthy could avail themselves of her art. All day long and in the evenings carriages would stop at the door or in the square, and set down their occupants.

If they halted in the square, veiled figures of ladies would hasten to the house and be ushered into the reception rooms, of which there were many, made like open boxes, so that the visitors might not see one another and be recognised. The ladies generally came in couples and held down their heads as if they were doing something wrong, and did not want to be recognised.

As for the men, they had the courage of their opinions and went boldly up to the door, either on foot or in cabs. Those who were gamblers or speculators on the turf or the Stock Exchange were excellent customers of Madame Menzies, for she professed to tell lucky numbers in foreign lotteries, and predict whether stocks and shares would go up or down. She also indicated winning horses in races, and it must be confessed that her prophecies were, as a rule, more successful than those of the newspaper prophets.

Soon after his interview and conversation with his brother Lord Tarlington, the Hon. Villiers Sutton might have been seen waiting for admittance at the door of Madame Menzies, which was opened by a tall imposing negro of the true Nubian type, who, without asking any questions, ushered the visitor into one of those cabinets we have mentioned, closing the door after him as if it were useless to utter a word, and Mr. Sutton was alone in the house of mystery.

A sofa, two chairs, and a table comprised the furniture. On the table were books, magazines, and papers. No pictures adorned the walls. The room was lighted by three gas jets in a handsome chandelier.

Throwing himself on the lounge he lighted a cigar and prepared to pass the dreary interval which, from experience, he knew must elapse before he could be admitted to the presence of the clairvoyant, such having to wait until his or her turn came, the right of interview going by priority of arrival, no distinction being made for the rank or importance of one visitor over the other.

Fortunately he had arrived early, and there were only one or two before him, so that at the expiration of half an hour he was summoned by the ebony attendant to appear before the high priestess of the magic art.

Madame Menzies occupied an apartment on the first floor, which was of large extent. She did not disdain the aid of art to impress those who consulted her. The room was lighted by an electric lamp, suspended from the ceiling like a ball of bluish fire.

The walls were draped with heavy black velvet, no windows being visible. At least a dozen snakes ran about the room, hissing and coiling themselves up in a threatening manner; presumably their fangs had been drawn, or they belonged to a harmless species. The madame sat in a chair covered with rich brocade, dressed simply in black silk, ornamented with diamonds and pearls. Precious stones glittered in her hair, hung pendant from her ears and neck.

She was tall, dark, handsome, with glittering black eyes, thin but regular features, which were shadowed by a sad expression. Her general appearance was attractive, her manner imperious, if not commanding, and her face when animated seemed to beam with electricity, which was communicated to the person near as if by flying sparks transmitted by a battery from an induction coil.

On a table before her were seven skulls piled in a pyramidal heap. Near these sat an owl, and several bats flew about the room. She appeared to be sleepy, as if her strength had been severely taxed that day, but she motioned Mr. Sutton to a chair in front of her.

"I expected you," she exclaimed. "You have had unexpected trouble; but you have not come to me to tell your fortune. There is something weightier you wish me to do."

In spite of his self-possession and knowledge of the world he was somewhat staggered at this communication, for he had never visited Madame



Menzies before. Often had he heard of her, for she was a common topic of conversation.

He laughed at what he called supernatural performances and derided superstition, yet he was a believer in mesmerism. As she fixed her gaze upon him the sensation pierced him through, and a thrill pervaded his frame.

"Since you know so much, madame," he answered, "I presume it is unnecessary for me to state the reason of my visit."

"Nay," she said. "It is for you to speak and for me to answer."

She removed her steadfast gaze from him, and he breathed easier, experiencing a sense of relief, as does the fascinated bird when the serpent takes away his eyes.

"I want you to attend a masked ball with me to-night," he exclaimed, "and see if you can place a young lady, whom I shall indicate to you, under the sway of your mesmeric power."

"Is she young, pure, innocent?"

"I have every reason to believe that she is all that you describe."

"Then I will control her. Tell me more."

"If you can get her into your carriage, I wish you to convey her to some retired place near London and keep her under your influence away from all eyes. She must be as completely hidden from the world as if she was not in it, yet no harm must be done her physically. Keep her in mental subjection; reduce her to idiocy, if you will; I care not."

Madame Menzies bowed her head in token of assent.

"Your price for this?" he asked.

She named a high sum which he did not hesitate to promise her, giving her his real name at her request, and paying her half of the stipulated amount. With his brother's purse at his command, he did not value money. All he wanted was to ensure success, and get Viola away from Lady Clementina's house before Dr. Newton's lawyers could commence the legal campaign.

When the clairvoyant had heard all, she arranged to call at Mr. Sutton's house at ten o'clock, in the character of Cleopatra and closely masked. Mr. Sutton was on friendly terms with his sister, and had received an invitation to the ball which she was to give that evening.

She was anxious that he should see Viola, as she wished to enlist his sympathies on her behalf, not knowing that he had made a solemn compact with Lord Tarlington to destroy Viola's chance of coming into the property.

"Two things you have not told me," exclaimed Madame Menzies. "Who is the girl, and why do you want her removed and buried from the world?"

"I do not see that it is necessary to tell you that," he replied, "because it involves a family secret which cannot possibly concern you. Besides, I have not time or inclination to enter into particulars now. Perhaps the girl will tell you herself when she is in your power."

Madame Menzies again fixed her fiery eyes upon him, and the same tremulous feeling which had at first oppressed him came over his body. The clairvoyant rose up from her chair. Her form dilated, assuming grander dimensions; her eyes were like live coals. She extended her arms, closing and unclosing her hands rapidly, and jerking them towards him, as if throwing the odic force of which she was possessed into the trembling being before her. Gradually his eyes closed, his hands and arms hung powerless by his side, his head drooped, and he was evidently oblivious of all around him.

"Ha!" she cried in the voice of a Judith triumphing over Holofernes. "Did he doubt my power? Look at him now, abject and helpless. Speak!" she added, speak! I command you!"

His livid lips parted, and he slowly, as if with difficulty, murmured:

"What is your will?"

"Who is the victim of your wiles?" she demanded.

"She is called Viola Harcourt, but in reality she is the daughter of the late Lord Tarlington. She has powerful friends who are trying to get the property for her from my brother, the pre-

sent lord. We are afraid of the exposure, and wish to seclude the girl as the best means of defeating our enemies."

"It is to accomplish this that you employ me?"

"It is. I believe that you can make her obey you by means of your mesmeric power."

Madame Menzies rang the bell, which was promptly answered by the stalwart negro.

"Remove that man!" she said.

The negro took him in his arms as if he had been a child and carried him down the stairs, placing him on the lounge in the room he had waited before he was conducted to the presence of the clairvoyant.

When the Hon. Fitzharding Sutton recovered consciousness, he felt a severe pain at the back of his head; his blood seemed numbed in his veins, though his brow throbbled feverishly, as if a thousand shuttles were at work in his brain. He had some difficulty in collecting his thoughts, and a shudder ran through him, as if he had suddenly come in contact with ice, which was slowly melting down his spinal column.

"Confound it!" he said, "that woman must have been experimenting on me. I have been asleep and had dreams."

Putting on his hat he went into the hall, where he found the negro smilingly awaiting him. Giving him a fee the door was promptly opened, and he passed into the street feeling dizzy and weak.

At the same time a thin, spare man, wearing a black frock coat buttoned up to the throat, with a high hat scrupulously brushed, and having black gloves and a small cane, went up the steps after bestowing a rapid glance at Mr. Sutton.

"That is my man," he exclaimed.

Knocking at the clairvoyant's door, the stranger was admitted, and after awaiting his turn, duly ushered into Madame Menzies' presence. She looked keenly at him, as if she had a vague, indistinct recollection of his sharply cut, intellectual features, but no sign of recognition came from her lips; the remembrance had faded into the dim past of the long ago.

"You have had a visit from the Hon. Fitzharding Sutton," exclaimed the stranger. "May I inquire on what business the brother of Lord Tarlington sought these rooms of mystery?"

"It is not my custom to speak of the affairs of my clients," replied the madame. "By what right do you ask?"

He handed her a card, on which was neatly printed:

"Monsieur Dubois, Private Detective, Adelaide Street, Strand."

"We have met before," he said. "Your memory is defective if you do not recognise me."

Madame Menzies leant her head on her hand as if buried in deep thought.

"Yes," she replied, suddenly, and looking up, "I do remember now; it was in Paris six years ago."

"In Paris," repeated M. Dubois, tapping his forehead as if to recall every incident; "you were then Leonine, the trance medium and assistant to the Italian Countess di Cazenova, otherwise called La Dama Blanca. Where is she now?"

La Dama Blanca, or the White Lady, was a woman who had left a name in Paris as the most unscrupulous adventuress since the days of Ninon de l'Enclos; her fame at one time rivalled that of Cagliostro and Mesmer.

"She has retired from business," answered Madame Menzies.

"Precisely. There was a little trouble about a lady's jewels. You see I know everything. Now will you not tell me if Mr. Sutton's visit was not connected with a young lady whom Lord Tarlington has reason to fear?"

"No," replied the clairvoyant, boldly. "He merely wanted to know the winner of the great race. I gave him the name of a horse and he went away satisfied."

"Is that all? If he comes again and consults you about the lady I have mentioned, will you communicate with me?"

"I will."

"Then we part friends. It would be a pity for La Dama Blanca to be forced from her seclusion and taken to Paris, where she would have to answer a charge of swindling before the Tribunal of Correctional Police. Good-morning. I am glad to see you looking so charming, and I kiss your hands."

With a polite bow the detective took his leave.

"We shall have more trouble than I thought with this girl," muttered the clairvoyant. "She is surrounded by acute and vigilant friends. This detective is specially engaged. I must be cautious. Poor di Cazenova; she is my good friend, and shall not be molested."

She rang the bell.

"Memphis," she exclaimed, when the negro entered, "are there many people waiting?"

"Nine," replied Memphis.

"Send them away. I shall see no one to-day. Order my carriage at once."

Retiring to an upper chamber, she divested herself of her jewels, and putting on an ordinary walking-dress, soon afterwards was driven away in her carriage, which was drawn by two splendid bays.

The coachman took the direction of the Wandsworth Road, passed through Balham and Streatham, stopping at length at a house standing in its own grounds at Merton Abbey. The house was of ancient build; the grounds were surrounded by a high wall, the entrance being through iron gates which were kept locked. Madame Menzies alighted from the carriage, opening the gates with a private key, the carriage awaiting her return outside.

No asylum could have been more secluded. The gardens were extensively wooded, but at that time of year presented a desolate appearance. Going up the steps she rang the bell, and was admitted by an aged servant, who ushered her into a handsome drawing-room, where an old lady was seated reading a book.

This lady was La Dama Blanca, otherwise the Countess di Cazenova. Her face preserved the traces of former beauty, and she was richly dressed. Extending her hand to the clairvoyant she smilingly bade her welcome.

"Is business then so bad that you visit me thus early in the day?" she inquired.

"No; the idiots are as credulous as ever," answered Madame Menzies. "I have come on important business. Dubois is in London; he called on me to-day."

La Dama Blanca's white face grew still whiter, and assumed the pallor of the grave.

"He must not find me," she exclaimed. "If they take me to Paris my enemies will persecute me, and incarceration in a prison would be my death. I had hoped I was forgotten, and that my declining years would be allowed to glide away in peace, secluded from the world in this old house."

"There is no danger at present, and one can always buy Dubois. I know him. Money is what he adores. But listen, I have a grand coup in hand. It will make our fortune, for it places one of the richest noblemen in England in our power."

She proceeded to relate the conversation which had taken place between her and Mr. Sutton relative to Viola, to which the countess lent an attentive ear.

"I shall bring her down here to-night after the ball," she concluded, "and you must do the rest. She must be kept a prisoner, and on no account must she have access to those without. So long as we keep her here, so long shall we be able to extract money from Mr. Sutton and his brother."

La Dama Blanca shook her head.

"My dear," she replied, "I implore you to abandon this enterprise. No good can come of it. I am gifted with second sight. Trouble looms in the distance."

"I have passed my word and accepted money," said Madame Menzies. "It is too late to retract. Besides, I am brave. If anything bad should happen we have wealth, and we will leave this foggy, cold-hearted land and go to some more genial clime."

"Is it not best to leave well alone?"

"Not in this case. I like the excitement of the thing. Do not be faint-hearted; we will carry it to a successful conclusion, and if not—"

She paused and shrugged her shoulders expressively.

"Well!" ejaculated the countess.

"We fall in good company. Lord Tarlington is our employer."

It was in vain that La Dama Blanca urged her pupil to give up the idea, and finding she could not shake her determination, she reluctantly consented to aid in the plot. Before Madame Menzies left it was decided that Viola, if possible, should be brought to the old house at Merton Abbey, where a room should be prepared for her.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE BALL.

As round her fell her long, fair hair  
She looked to Heaven with a frenzied air,  
Which seemed to ask if help were there.

BYRON.

THE new life which Viola led at Lady Clementina Sutton's was a great change from the old one, but it could not help being a pleasant one. What girl would not have been charmed with it? She was introduced to agreeable companions, her time was spent in driving and making calls, in balls and parties.

She had all the dresses and clothes she wished to buy, for her aunt supplied her with money liberally. The masked ball, to which Fitzharding Sutton had received an invitation, had been a long time in preparation, and was looked forward to as one of the events of the season by the members of the world of fashion.

Lady Clementina had had a costume specially designed for her, and was to appear in ruffs and furbelows as Queen Elizabeth. Viola had chosen the severe, but interesting, dress of a nun. A very pretty nun she made too, looking as innocent and devout as any member of a cloister could possibly do.

Her beads were of amber, and round her neck she wore a superb diamond cross, lent her for the occasion by her aunt. Towards ten o'clock the guests began to arrive, and the spacious ball-rooms were soon filled to repletion with the invited guests.

Kings and Queens, soldiers, sailors, barristers, knights of the middle ages, crusaders, representatives of all nationalities, bears, monkeys, demons with their tails over their arms and their pitchforks in their hands, jesters, African princes, Chinese mandarins, ladies as the four seasons, in short the world seemed to have been ransacked for costumes.

The bands discoursed agreeable and lively dance music. The floor was thronged with dancers. The refreshment rooms resounded to the popping of the champagne corks. Conservatories, filled with flowers and exotic shrubs, echoed to the murmur of lovers' voices, for in spite of mask and domino, those who wished to meet and be known, speedily discovered one another.

About one o'clock, when the fun and merriment were at their height, Mr. Sutton, attired as a troubadour, and leading a lady dressed as Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, appeared in the midst of the revellers, attracting no attention in the gay crowd. Whispering a word to the lady, he conducted her to a seat and advanced to an inner room in which Lady Clementina Sutton, who had removed her mask, was agreeably chatting with such friends as wished to make themselves known to her.

"How is my fair sister to-night?" asked Mr. Sutton, bowing.

"Ah, Fitz!" she replied, "how kind of you to come. My little ball would have been incomplete without you."

"Scarcely, since you have half London here," he answered. "I must really congratulate you on a most successful gathering. It is indeed a triumph."

"Praise coming from an exquisite like you is

worth having," she said, laughing, and adding: "We have the French, Russian, and Turkish ambassadors; three dukes; a foreign prince or two; several earls and marquises, and I don't know how many lords and ladies. It will all be in the 'Post' to-morrow morning."

"This is as nothing to me," exclaimed Mr. Sutton. "I want to have the honour of an introduction to the rose which you have transplanted to your parterres of fashion. I mean our niece, Viola."

A tall and graceful nun standing by the side of the hostess, started at these words.

"There she is," said her ladyship, indicating the nun. "Unmask, my dear. This is your uncle."

Viola removed her mask, and Mr. Sutton gazed on her lovely face with undisguised admiration.

"I am very glad to know you," he continued. "I had no idea that we had so much loveliness in the family, although, of course, Tarlington does not like it. Very much credit is due to you, sister, for unearthing such a pearl beyond all price. She will be the rage. We shall have half the young men, and the old ones too, going mad about her."

Viola resumed her mask, and Lady Clementina took her brother on one side.

"Of course, if you support us," she said, "the allowance that Tarlington makes you shall be continued. I will have a deed drawn up to that effect."

"You can rely upon me," replied the hypocrite.

"Thank you. She is such a dear good child, I am quite in love with her myself. Her case is such a strong one, that it is useless for Tarlington to fight us. We are sure to win."

"Such support as I can give you shall be yours. I am on the side of innocence, justice, and virtue."

Her ladyship thanked him cordially, and he circulated once more among the crowd. His steps penetrated to one of the conservatories, where he was surprised to see the beautiful nun standing by the side of a Turkish Pacha, gorgeous in a turban and a profusion of gold lace, with a scimitar by his waist.

The clash and clang of the music only penetrated with a subdued cadence to this delightful retreat, so that the words of the couple were audible to Mr. Sutton, who concealed himself behind an orange tree, whose blossoms made the surrounding air odorous.

"How did you find me out, Sandford?" asked Viola, for it was Dr. Newton's son who was with her.

"The eye of love can penetrate any disguise," he replied. "Besides, I heard the tone of your voice when you spoke to Lady Clementina."

"Is it not a nice ball?" Viola remarked. "Such variety of costume, such dancing, such fun. Oh, we must have a dance!"

"Certainly. I intended to ask you. What shall it be?"

"A waltz, of course. I warn you. I am a very exacting partner. You must not hug me too tight, and if you tread on my dress I shall scold you awfully."

"Won't it be funny to see a nun dancing with a Turk?" observed Sandford.

"Oh, no. I saw a polar bear going through a quadrille just now with an Esquimaux maiden."

"Do you love me to-night, Vi?" asked Sandford, amorously.

"About as much as usual," she replied, vaguely.

"How much does that mean?" he inquired, with a puzzled air.

"Oh, don't ask stupid questions. I hate spooning!" she cried impatiently, anxious to put a stop to the conversation. "Take me to the ball-room."

He offered her his arm, and they walked on and were soon whirling in the giddy maze of the fascinating waltz.

"So," muttered Sutton, "she has got one man angling after her already. He's very far gone, poor fellow! but she doesn't care much for him,

or I am no judge of women. Oh, woman! woman! you are generally an enigma, always a delusion."

(To be Continued.)

## ANGRY WORDS LEAVE BITTER MEMORIES.

A THOUGHTLESS word, a quick reply,  
In moment of brief anger spoken,  
And nought can e'er again ally  
The chord of love and feeling broken.  
Then hearts asunder beat alone  
Which in the past vowed ne'er to sever,  
While lips which should in haste atone,  
Restrained by pride, are closed for ever.

For ever—ah, 't must so remain,  
Since folly will no comfort borrow,  
And scornful faces speak disdain,  
Though bosoms almost burst with sorrow.  
And watching treasured hopes depart,  
To vanish 'mid a storm of weeping,  
Those once so dear are whirled apart,  
And grief is left in memory's keeping.

So lives are wrecked, joys die away,  
And paths once carpeted with roses,  
Are strewn with blossoms in decay,  
While 'neath each leaf a thorn reposes.  
And when too late comes vain regret,  
Refused by conscience absolution,  
Say, what is left but to forget,  
Or bear till death brings dissolution.

G. C. B.

## A PUBLIC RESERVOIR.

I SAW an interesting sight while in Venice. Entering a little square shut in by high houses, and, like most Venetian squares, dominated by the unfinished facade of a time-stained church, I noticed a singular activity among the people. They were scurrying in from every alley, and hastening from every house door, with odd-shaped copper buckets on hook-ended wooden bows, and with little coils of rope. Old men and women, boys and girls, all gathered closely about a covered well kerb in the middle of the square; and still they hurried on, until they stood a dozen deep around it. Presently the church tower slowly struck eight, and a little old man forced his way through the crowd, passed his ponderous iron key through the lid, and unlocked the well.

There immediately ensued a scene of great activity. The kettles went jangling into it, and came slopping out again at an amazing rate, and the people trudged off home, each with a pair of them swung from the shoulder. The wells are deep cisterns, which are filled during the night, and it is out of amiable consideration for those who love their morning nap that they are given as good a chance as their neighbours of getting an unsoiled supply. It is the first instance that has come to my notice of a commendable municipal restraint upon the reprehensible practice of early rising. I found, on closer investigation, that the water was of excellent quality.—H.

GARIBALDI was married recently at Maddelena. He was surrounded by all his children and grandchildren, and by all the friends who could be at Maddelena in time for the wedding.

"A LADY entering an omnibus or street car should bow slightly to the passengers," says a recent authority on etiquette. In order to secure the observance of this point, the driver starts the horses a little before the lady is seated.





[MISLEADING THE COUNTESS.]

## LOST THROUGH GOLD; OR, A BEAUTIFUL SINNER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Frank Bertram's Wife," "Strong Temptation," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER XVII.

#### THE IVY HOUSE.

The proper study of mankind is men.

ALICE's fellow passengers arrived at the Ivy House at the very minute when Dorothea was welcoming her companion. Wraps, parcels and all they trotted into the drawing-room where Ela and Arthur were sitting.

"My dear, what do you think? Mrs. Hardy has engaged a companion."

"How very strange," said Ela, in the wondering tone that might have been pretty in a young girl, but was very unbecoming in the third Miss Carden; "why I thought she didn't mind being alone a bit, sisters, so different from poor little me."

"Mrs. Hardy a pretty girl; Ela old maid."

This came from Arthur. He had been playing cat's cradle with his sister, and in her surprise she had forgotten to take the string off his hands, to which inattention she probably owed his remark. Ela could have boxed his ears willingly, but as they were alone she forgave him.

Miss Jemima produced a stick of butter scotch, Miss Susan a bag of lemon drops, both of which were for the idiot. As he sat munching them the others felt free to return to the all-engrossing subject.

"How did you hear? Are you sure it's true?"

"Quite true, we've seen her; and only fancy, Ela, she came from Brixton."

"Is she young?" asked the family baby, affectedly.

"Young enough to be a nice friend for you, dear; we must get Mrs. Hardy to let you take some nice walks together."

"I don't like Mrs. Hardy," was the unexpected reply.

"Dear me, child, why not?"

The child could give no reason but the one so emphatically a woman's:

"Because I don't. I can't explain it any better, Jemima."

"Well, we must go and dress for dinner, Ela. Has James come in?"

"Ever so long ago. He is shut up in the library. He never comes near Arty and me."

True enough James Carden was in the library, but he was not reading or making the least attempt at study. He stood leaning against the mantelpiece, his brows knitted in earnest thought—a cloud in his light blue eyes.

He was not a handsome fellow, neither was he plain; he was essentially what is called a ladies' man, very much below middle height, with a kind of smooth, glossy appearance as though he had just come out of a bandbox. After a hard day at the office, or a long night journey, he still preserved this outer gloss, a kind of artificial polish which pervaded both his dress and person.

He was thin, so thin as to be a reproach to Miss Jemima's housekeeping. He usually wore spectacles, so that people seldom had a chance of looking at his eyes, which were of the mildest, wateriest blue. His mouth by constant biting of his lips internally had been compressed into an almost invisible seam across his face, which effect had been aided by the dead whiteness of his lips. A very clever man, a very agreeable man, a man whom gossips said could marry anyone, but whom when I looked on I always thought no woman could possibly love.

Fear him, serve him, flatter him perhaps, but not love, oh! surely not love. He passed his hand across his face, and pulled his whiskers savagely. Then he seated himself before his writing table and took up a pen. There was no hesitation now, whatever knotty point had been troubling him was settled.

"Sir,—I wish to know the maiden name of Mrs. Hardy, widow of the late Raymond Hardy, Esq. They were married under peculiar circumstances, probably by special licence rather more than a year ago. This ascertained, follow up the clue and let me know what calling the said Mrs. Hardy pursued before her marriage. I need hardly enjoin on you secrecy and dispatch.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES CARDEN."

This missive he addressed to "John Stone, Confidential Enquiry Office."

"That will do it," he meditated, laying down his pen. There is some mystery in that woman's life. Nothing wrong, I know, but something that might damage her in the eyes of her purse-proud, stuck up neighbours. When I know her secrets perhaps she won't treat me quite so cavalierly as she does at present. A little management and skill and I shall have her yet. For forty-five years," and he brought his hand down on the table with a bang, "I've never failed in anything I made up my mind to do, and I make up my mind now to marry Dorothea. It is not the money," he went on as eagerly as though to a listener. "I'm fond of money, but I should feel the same if she had not a penny. It's her I want. If only I can win her I'll make her happy. The old ladies (meaning his sisters) shall not worry her and I'll spend my whole fortune on her. Good heaven, how I love that woman, and she lets her hand touch mine like a lump of marble and shuns me as though I was the pestilence. What is it in her makes such an idiot of me? I've seen many handsomer women—women she couldn't hold a candle to in point of beauty, and yet I never felt for one of them as I do for her. Is there anything between her and

that cousin, I wonder. Duke Hardy has never beaten me on a point of law; is he going to beat me in what I value a thousand times more. Hardly. He was just like her husband's brother, and men don't marry their sisters-in-law."

He folded and addressed his letter, and locked it carefully away, then he took out another envelope adorned with a dainty monogram and directed in a pretty feminine hand—

"Mrs. Hardy presents her compliments to Mr. Carden, and begs to thank him for his polite gift."

"Cool that, what I call chilly; the gift, a bouquet I paid five pounds for, and yet it's better than her sending it back. I was half afraid she'd do that. She wrote on her deepest black-edged paper too, and her husband's been dead more than a year. I wonder if she cared for him?"

And then as the dinner bell rang out its summons, he rose to join his sisters and the afflicted Arthur, and if he has little that is praiseworthy about him, at least afford him a little pity, reader, in being blessed with such an uninteresting family.

They were all afraid of him, even Susan just a little: he had not been an unkind brother, but he was not one with them. Arthur with his personal remarks and defective pronouns was far dearer to the sisters. A very long grace was said by Ela in a very indistinct voice, and then in solemn silence James ladled out the soup, and everyone looked as though dinner were a very solemn affair indeed, and speaking strictly prohibited, until Arthur generously poured the whole of his soup into Ela's lap, when she bewailed greatly.

"Artie's a naughty boy," she said, reprovingly to the culprit; "he's spilt his soup over his poor little sister."

James looked annoyed. At times he found Ela very trying. Before Mrs. Hardy settled at The Grange his own family had not seemed so very distasteful to him. Now he was perpetually contrasting his three sisters with Dorothea, his own prosy home with the easeful calm of The Grange. It was not fair on the three old maids, it was not fair on the Ivy House; but what man in love ever stopped to think of what was fair, particularly if he was turned forty before he experienced the tender passion?

James Carden was honestly in love, if he did not mean to be very honest in the means he used to gain his end. When the servants had retired Jimmie informed him of the great news. He showed more interest than she expected.

"A companion: it's time she did now Mrs. Stone's gone."

"But dear Mrs. Hardy has so many friends."

"Bah! what she wants is someone in the house; with Duke Hardy always down there it isn't proper for her to be alone."

"Not proper, at her time of life, a married woman," exclaimed Ela.

"She isn't half your age if she is a married woman."

And with this taunt he flung out of the room, and the stricken damsel burst into tears and was tenderly soothed by Miss Jimmie and scolded by Miss Susan, while Arthur took advantage of their preoccupation to eat the whole of the almonds and raisins on the table.

If Dorothea could only have known!

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE DOCTOR'S VERDICT.

Murder most foul as in the best it is,  
But this most foul, strange and unnatural.

MADemoiselle GRUET left her frightened pupils and returned to the library. She found the countess stretched in an easy chair, her own maid bending over her and trying to pour brandy between her tightly clenched teeth. The rich dinner dress, the sparkling jewels, and the rare lace looked strangely out of place.

The French lady noticed that they had placed the countess facing the sofa. When she opened

her eyes they must rest first on her husband. Mrs. Ward and one of the upper servants were attending to the earl. They had tried restorative after restorative in vain. He lay there just as little True had found him, his eyes closed, fast asleep.

Mademoiselle had not known Lord Aston long, but even she could notice the change in him from the time when she first came to the Manor. The withered skin, the sunken cheeks, the worn, pinched features, all told a tale of decay. It flashed on the Frenchwoman that there was something unnatural in the earl's illness. It had no recognised name; no doctor had attended him.

But she banished the idea. It seemed absurd. Without speaking to the maid she shifted the position of the chair, so that Lady Aston's eyes should not fall on that still face. Then she went up to Mrs. Ward.

"It is not a bit of good, madame," whispered the housekeeper, "my lord's gone. He'll never open his eyes again."

Low as the words were spoken they reached the countess. She had not revived at Marie's cool volatile and harshness, but those words recalled her to memory. She started up wildly.

"Lord Aston is not dead," she cried, fiercely, to Mrs. Ward, "he is only asleep. Lady Gertrude could not wake him. He is old and sleeps so heavily. He will wake for me."

Neither of the servants dared to contradict her.

"I will wake him, miladi," cried mademoiselle. "You are not fit for this. Death is ill!"

She turned her beautiful eyes scornfully on the Frenchwoman.

"You are wrong. You know nothing about it." And then she fell on her knees before the sofa.

"Frank," she called, softly. "It is I, your wife Sybil. You will speak to me."

"It is no use, my lady," said the housekeeper, with tears in her eyes, "he is gone."

"I don't believe it," said the countess. "How could he die in a house full of people without someone's knowing it? I was here with him till just before lunch, and he never complained of feeling worse."

"The earl has not been looking well, my lady," began poor Mrs. Ward, who hardly knew what to say not to displease her mistress, "but the doctor—"

"Yes, the doctor will make him well. Send for the doctor," ordered my lady, haughtily.

He had already been sent for. While my lady lay in her swoon, a messenger had set off in hot haste. Almost before she had done speaking he was announced, an old man, who had attended the Duncans for years, who had known the earl from his own childhood.

One look was enough for him. Dr. Browne knew that no human skill could restore Francis, Earl of Aston. He had gone on a journey whence there is no return. Dr. Browne had never liked the countess. He had guessed a little of her treatment of Alice Tracy. But no father's voice could have been gentler than that in which he broke to her the truth that she was a widow. Barely twenty-four, and a widow! It was enough to disarrange prejudice.

Lady Aston did not dispute the truth now. She believed him though she had doubted others; but she broke into a fit of hysterical weeping, and had to be taken to her own room. Leaving her there with her maid to take care of her, the doctor returned to the library. The governess and Mrs. Ward still lingered there, waiting for what they could hardly have told.

"Mademoiselle Gruet," began Dr. Browne, who had attended the little Frenchwoman in some slight disorder, and cordially liked her, "the countess seems utterly incapable of attending to business. I have something very serious to say, and it must be said to you and Mrs. Ward as the most responsible persons here. Can I rely upon your silence and discretion?"

The housekeeper bridled, and said, simply:

"Yes, sir."

Mademoiselle looked full at the doctor with her bright, bead-like, black eyes.

"I will do all for those so poor infants."

"Then you will help to avenge their father. Lord Aston has been foully, cruelly murdered. For the sake of his poor young widow, of his helpless children, in respect for his own memory, we must do all in our power to discover the murderer."

"Murder!" gasped forth one listener. "Murderer! But it is impossible!" exclaimed the other.

"I wish it were. Lord Aston has been done to death slowly, cruelly, systematically, by poison administered in small doses. I stake my professional reputation on it."

Dead silence followed this speech. The doctor was the first to break it.

"I suppose Miss Tracy is with the children. We must ask her to join us. As Lord Aston's kinswoman she has a right to hear all we have to tell."

Mrs. Ward looked uncomfortable.

"Dr. Browne, the fact is Miss Tracy is not here."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"She's run away, sir. At least, I'm afraid so. I went to her room this afternoon with some clean linen, and the drawers they were half empty and everything gone. She wasn't at lunch. The little ladies have been asking for her everywhere."

"Woman!" thundered Dr. Browne, "for heaven's sake be careful what you say. Do you know what this might mean—what the police would say if proved?"

"Why, sir," replied the poor housekeeper, frightened at his vehemence, "they can't say but the truth, and it's no disgrace to Miss Alice that my lady just worried the life out of her. Me and the servants know it well. Mamzelle there, too."

"Yes," said mademoiselle, "that is so. The dear child's life it was one torture. Miladi one fiend."

"Is there no end to that poor girl's troubles?" said the old doctor, sadly. "My good creatures," to his companions, "don't you see what people will say? The Earl of Aston is found dead. Medical evidence proves death was caused by repeated doses of slow poison, which from their frequency could not have been administered by a stranger. And here on the very day of his death, suddenly, a member of the household, a girl who sat at his own table, goes off no one knows whither."

"And you mean they'll suspect poor Miss Alice?"

"I do, Mrs. Ward."

"Then they'd be idiots," retorted the housekeeper, forgetting politeness in her anger. "The lassie 'd just be taking the bread out of her own mouth an she were bad enough to think of such a thing. While my lord lived Miss Alice had a home—such as it was—at the Manor. Once the breath out of his poor body, my lady 'd turn her adrift."

"Lord Aston would have given Miss Tracy ten thousand pounds on her wedding day. If she was unmarried at his death he left her the same sum in his will. The countess told me so herself."

"And you suspect her? You think Miss Alice one villain empoisonneur?" asked mademoiselle, reproachfully.

"No," returned the old doctor, warmly. "I suspect nothing. I have known Alice Tracy since she was a wee bit bairnie. But there's an awful case against her, and please Heaven she doesn't set foot north of Aberdeen, poor lassie, till the police have got their hands on the lord's real murderer."

Very Scotch had Dr. Browne waxed in his excitement. The door opened noiselessly and my lady glided in: she had a habit of gliding noiselessly about which procured her little favour in the servants' hall. She went straight up to Dr. Browne and put one hand on his shoulder, saying hoarsely:

"I am better now, tell me what was it that killed my husband?"

Mademoiselle bent her eyes on the ground. She felt dimly conscious the less said the better before the countess, but Mrs. Ward was not so prudent. She burst forth:



"The doctor says my master was poisoned. My lady, just to think of it, my lord, who never hurt a fly, to be done to death like that!"

"Was it poison, Dr. Browne?" asked my lady, eagerly.

"Aye, arsenic, I think."

It was a short answer, he was not disposed to enlarge on the subject to the countess, his fears and sympathy were all for Miss Tracy. He had been eager to avenge his many years' patient, but he would not stir a finger in the matter if by so doing he should harm one hair of Alice's golden head. The countess had quite recovered her self-possession. The need for action had given her strength, she rang the bell violently.

"I shall send for the police."

"Lady Aston, I beseech you do nothing rash," entreated the doctor. "By placing this matter now in the hands of the law you may be bringing a load of unmerited trouble on an innocent person?"

"The doctor's been saying, my lady, they'll think it was Miss Alice because she ran away to-day," explained Mrs. Ward, the irrepressible.

Dr. Browne and mademoiselle exchanged glances. If looks could kill, these two would have had summary vengeance on the garrulous old housekeeper.

"Perhaps she did do it," said Lady Aston in a low clear voice, so slowly that each word fell with painful distinctness on the ear; "she was poor, very poor, and she had been disappointed of a rich husband. The earl had left her ten thousand pounds in his will. He told her so. I heard him."

"Madame," interrupted the doctor, angrily, "if you are a woman have mercy. A hundred tongues will be ready to fix this crime on an innocent girl. Your ladyship, at whose table she sat day by day, who witnessed her blameless life, should be the last to raise the voice of scandal."

James came now in answer to the summons and took his lady's orders in absolute silence. The footman thought the world was turning topsy-turvy. He had served at Aston Manor for twelve months, and nothing had disturbed the even tenor of events. In one day Miss Tracy had run away, my lord been found dead, and now the police were to be summoned. It was enough to take one's breath away.

"I am going upstairs," announced my lady shortly; "you can come with me if you like, Dr. Browne. If Miss Tracy has simply eloped like other romantic, hair-brained girls, there will surely be some absurd note of penitence left behind her, if not," and her eyes gleamed wildly, "I for one shall believe that her hand had part in my husband's death."

The doctor rose to follow her. Mrs. Ward remained with the dead. Mademoiselle Gruet returned to the sorrowing children, who had cried themselves to sleep in each other's arms. Lady Aston led Dr. Browne straight to Alice's chamber, a very simple room which, as Mrs. Ward had stated, bore many signs of a hasty departure. No one entered the apartment usually except the under-housemaid, or Alice would not have left the drawers open and a heap of burnt paper in the grate.

"She has gone and she means to stay," began Lady Aston. "I suppose you admit that is against her?"

"It would not surprise anyone who knew what her position was," returned the man of physic, calmly.

My lady went on turning about the scanty contents of the drawers. She found little there. Alice had not retained the elaborate trousseau prepared for Ralph Johnson's bride, and her own possessions were very few, and she had required them nearly all to take with her, or rather to send in mademoiselle's large trunk.

"Look here," said Lady Aston, suddenly, taking from the small corner drawer a white paper such as chemists use. It was tumbled and creased, but in its folds was a little white powder.

"What is that?"

Dr. Browne started as though he had been shot.

The paper had been hidden in Alice's drawer, he had witnessed its discovery, and the remains of its contents were arsenic. There in that tumbled paper was sufficient to kill a strong man. How much of the poison had Alice Tracy originally possessed, and for what had she used it?

When the two children woke from their troubled sleep they saw Mademoiselle bending over them with tears wet on her cheeks, and the memory of their trouble came back to them in all its bitterness.

"Papa, papa," wailed True.

Mademoiselle, in her broken English, with many loving words, told them the truth: papa would never speak to them again. He was not ill, he did not suffer any pain, but he had gone to be with their own mother in Heaven. The children listened gravely, silently. They seemed to have no tears left to shed. Adela looked thoughtful and troubled. True asked, suddenly:

"Why couldn't mamma have gone instead?"

"Perhaps papa wanted our own mother," suggested Adela. "I don't think he has looked quite happy ever since he came home in the summer."

"Where is Alice?" asked True. "Does she know? Why doesn't she come to us, mademoiselle? I want Alice. Tell her we will be very good if she will only come."

It was an awkward question, but it must be met. The explanation was difficult, but the children were both clear-sighted; they knew quite well Alice had never been a favourite with the countess, so they understood it when mademoiselle said Alice had gone away because she was unhappy.

"Mamma did not love her?" remarked True.

"No, and miladi may tell you many things against your so poor cousin, but Miss Alice one good young lady, and some day she come back."

"I think she was quite right to go," said True, simply. "Mamma would be unkind to her than ever now."

"But to lose her and papa in one day," moaned Adela, "to be left alone with mamma." They had a shrinking dread of their stepmother, which all her beauty and caresses could not quite dispel.

"You must stop with us always, mademoiselle," implored Adela.

And the governess promised. She had a warm heart, and she cried a little when she left the children asleep in their pretty white beds and thought, indignantly, Lady Aston might have come to kiss her husband's daughters and tell them while she lived they were not quite alone in the world.

Mademoiselle went slowly back to her school-room, expecting to find it empty and deserted, but to her surprise, late as it was, Dr. Browne was sitting there waiting for her. He placed a chair for her and began at once.

"Mademoiselle Gruet, things will go harder with that poor child, Alice Tracy, than I thought possible. Lady Aston is now shut up with the sergeant of police from Hasted, and no doubt he will adopt her belief in Miss Tracy's guilt. Worse than all, she has found in one of Alice's drawers a paper containing the remains of poison."

The doctor had been speaking in great agitation, he stopped now, remembering his listener was a foreigner, to ask:

"You understand me, mademoiselle?"

"But I do comprehend perfectly. She never did it, M. le Docteur. Ah, never!"

"Mademoiselle, by to-morrow they will be scouring the country far and wide for Alice Tracy; they can do nothing without a warrant, so they must wait for that. Now, I don't know where she is, do you?"

"And what for should I know were this so poor girl is gone?"

"Because you were her friend. The countess has found out so much, she will send for you presently and cross-question you as she has just cross-questioned me; but I, knowing nothing, could say nothing. Now you?"

"If I do know something I not say it."

"That's good, mademoiselle; but we want more: you would do anything for Alice?"

"But yes?"

"Then you must not make an enemy of my lady. It will not be enough to keep the secret of where Alice really is, but my lady must be led to think she is somewhere, else, to give Miss Tracy time to get clear of Scotland. Do you understand, mademoiselle?"

"But perfectly. I like Alice and I do detest miladi. Have no fear, Dr. Browne, I will do it well."

"And mademoiselle, remember your movements will be watched!"

"For vat den? Do miladi tink I did kill her lord?"

"No, but she thinks you will write to Alice Tracy, and by fair means or foul she will intercept the letter. Mademoiselle Gruet, you must not attempt to write to Alice."

"But I have promised. De poor child vill tink me one unkind."

"Let her, it is better so. You know where she is, forget you do know, mademoiselle; never breathe her address to a single creature."

"But it is one double part you wish me to play. Ah, but de good priest must absolve me."

"He'll absolve you right enough," seizing her hand and giving it a hearty squeeze. "You're a brave woman, mademoiselle."

The French governess, her visitor having departed, determined to go to bed. She was not displeased at an opportunity to match her wit against Lady Aston's; but the doctor had said delay was valuable, so it would be best for her not to see the countess that night. Mademoiselle was fairly on the stairs when she met Mrs. Ward in tears.

"Mamzelle, my lady wants you at once, please, in the dining-room."

"But I do fall with sleep, good Madame Vard. Vill de morning no do?"

"You do look tired, and no wonder, I'm sure, but my lady won't be put off. I never saw the like. She's talking as calm to the policeman as anything, while I can't keep my eyes dry. She's set on seeing you at once."

Suppressing a yawn mademoiselle walked off to the dining-room. Lady Aston sat in an arm-chair. A tall dark man was at the table making notes.

"This is Mademoiselle Gruet," said the countess, with a wave of her hand; "sit down, mademoiselle, Mr. Foster wishes to ask you some questions."

"With much respect, my lady, but I do fall with sleep; de good gentleman vill excuse me. I have been with those so dear children and I do go to sleep very much."

"We won't detain you long, madame," said Mr. Foster, briskly. "I only want to ask you for Miss Tracy's address."

Perhaps he thought to confuse her by the suddenness of the question, but mademoiselle was equal to the occasion, and said politely:

"Miss Tracy lives at de Manor, sir, it is her interior, her home you say."

The countess and Mr. Foster exchanged glances, then she took the questions on herself.

"You were that misguided girl's friend, mademoiselle, I cannot help thinking you know something of her movements."

"Miss Tracy do honour me with her confidence. Do I betray her? Me not a spy, miladi." The police-sergeant looked at the countess. His eye said:

"Don't make an enemy of this woman."

My lady changed her tone.

"Mademoiselle, if you know aught of Alice you had better tell me frankly. I know you too well to blame you for your kindness to a bad girl, who now seeks to involve you in her troubles."

"Then miladi, I vill say frankly Miss Tracy tell to me she not stop at de Manor, she was one miserable. Vy not, I say to her, go to my country in France, dere is many occasion for a young girl, and Miss Tracy she catch at the idea. She say she cross to Boulogne and then

go to Paris and see my family, who for me would aid her much."

"Then you think Alice Tracy was bound for Paris?"

"Sir," with surely pardonable falsehood, "I of it am certain she would go in de train to Aberdeen and den by vater."

"By water from Aberdeen to London and on from London to Boulogne?"

"Ah yes, it was an awful voyage for a so young girl, but de poor ting had so little money."

"Are you positive, mademoiselle?"

"Miladi, yes. I may make error not comprehending your voyages, but I do understand Miss Tracy to go to Boulogne and after Aberdeen by vater, and I do write to my family to expect her."

"And where do your family reside?"

"But my moder do live in de Faubourg Montmartre, Rue Roy, number eleven."

"Mademoiselle, you are an invaluable person; we shall not need to trouble you any longer."

Mademoiselle retired to her own room, there she wrote two letters, one to her mother, directing the good Parisienne to deny all knowledge of Miss Tracy, but to assert that she expected her daily. The other to the friend with whom, as she was well aware, her mother was staying at Boulogne. Both letters went in the same envelope addressed to Mademoiselle Brugé, Rue de Calais, Boulogne, and mademoiselle herself deposited it on the hall table. By this despatch she had gained a whole day on the countess, whose letter would go to Paris, and then be re-posted. The French governess slept the sleep of the just that night and had earned the right to do so.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A FATAL DELAY.

"Evil were the news he heard."

SCOTT.

WHILST Fate was so busy with the destinies of his friends in England, George Arnold was far away when he first heard of Ralph Gordon's death. We know he had left Aston, but it was his firm intention to return in three months and boldly ask Lord Aston for the hand of the girl whose heart he already possessed. "Man appoints," you know the rest of the old adage, reader.

The three months were almost over when George was thrown from his horse whilst riding in an obscure village in Normandy, and for days our hero lay hovering between life and death. Truly Fate was cruel to Alice Tracy; but for this accident she would have been George Arnold's affianced wife before the earl's death, and the dark pages in her history so surely approaching never written at all.

Kindly hands ministered to George in his illness. Many a woman's heart pitied the brave young Englishman, so evidently a soldier, suddenly laid low; they sighed when in the ravings of delirium he called on "Alice" to come to him to lay her cool hand once on his aching brow.

He was staying only a day or two in Dijon, with simply a knapsack, and no clue to his name or abode. He was known to be rich, but this had little to do with the care lavished on him by the simple village folk. In France a soldier has one claim more on a mother's heart than here in England, for all her sons are or have been soldiers too. They too may be ill far from home, dependent on strangers for all, and mother love is the strongest passion of the French peasantry.

There was quite a festival when George was able to receive visitors sitting up in state in the best bedroom, which, true French fashion, was also the reception-room. It would have been ungrateful to leave the good creatures the very moment he was able. George trusted Alice as his own soul; not a doubt of her truth came to him, so he lingered on a week or so more at Dijon after he might have left it.

How he reproached himself afterwards for this delay no tongue can tell. He played the

part of good fairy to the simple family who had nursed him. The father was old and getting too infirm to walk to and from the market in the next town. George begged him to accept of his horse; it would remind him of his English friend; then he found out that the pretty, blue-eyed daughter had been contracted to a young farmer whose relations did not welcome her quite cordially because she was a little beneath him in worldly wealth.

What pleasanter than to add to her lot? He did it all in such a pleasant, friendly fashion. It was not charity; it was not paying them for their kindness; it was pure, good feeling, and the good village folk accepted it as it was offered. Jeanne blushed and thanked him, and Antoine, the fine young bridegroom, begged that "monsieur" would stay for their wedding, which was not far distant.

George yielded and never enjoyed a wedding more. Jeanne made such a pretty bride, and it was so nice to see her able to hold her own with the mother-in-law who now, instead of slighting her, thought her quite an acquisition. When Mr. Arnold bid good-bye to the young people—who set off in the evening for their new home, preceded by the village pipers—Jeanne looked at him kindly with her big blue eyes, hoping "monsieur" would be happy too some day with a fair English lady.

George thanked her, and thought he should. He fancied the next wedding he attended would be his own. He left Dijon full of thankfulness for his recovery, and delightful anticipation of his meeting with Alice.

He only travelled as far as Rouen the first day, intending to sleep there and go on the next morning by Dieppe, which route, despite the long sea voyage, yet appeared his best way to England, or rather to Scotland from Rouen.

He ordered a private room at the best hotel, and sent for the English papers. For three weeks or more he had heard nothing of what was going on at home. He felt like a traveller returned from an exploring expedition. He seized the "Times" as an old friend, and had thoroughly enjoyed its contents for an hour before his eye caught sight of the following paragraph:

#### "SHOCKING TRAGEDY IN HIGH LIFE."

"It is with deep regret that we hear from Aberdeen of the murder of Lord Aston [the names and titles of the deceased earl followed.] On Thursday evening the countess discovered her husband lying insensible in the library. Medical aid was at once sent for, and life pronounced to be extinct, Doctor Browne declaring death to be the result of systematic poisoning by small doses. Suspicion at once fell on a young relative of the earl, who had left the Manor under peculiar circumstances that very day, and search being instituted, a paper was found in her room containing the remains of a preparation of arsenic. Miss Tracy is supposed to have gone to France, but no clue has yet been attained to her whereabouts. An inquest will of course be held. In the meantime the paper alluded to is in the hands of the police, and a warrant has been issued for the apprehension of Miss Tracy on the charge of wilful murder. The unhappy girl is barely twenty-two, and had spent her whole life at Aston Manor. She was the only child of Captain John Tracy by Lady Alice Duncan, and is first cousin once removed to the late Earl of Aston. Miss Tracy was engaged to Ralph Johnson, Esq., of Greatwood, Downshire.

"N.B.—It is alleged that his sudden death by depriving her of a rich husband supplied the motive for the crime. Under the earl's will she is said to inherit ten thousand pounds, no small temptation to a penniless girl."

A description of the fugitive followed. George Arnold sat as one turned to stone. Not one word of the accusation did he believe, but like Doctor Browne he saw the awful force of circumstantial evidence which would be brought to bear against his darling, and how difficult it would be to disprove it.

In this trouble she was as dear to him as ever.

His second love would be his last. Every minute seemed an hour to George Arnold. He never closed his eyes that night. With morning light he was in the train en route for England, bent on one thing—proving his darling's innocence.

(To be Continued.)

## FACTS FOR THE CURIOUS.

THE greyhound runs by eyesight only, and this we observe as a fact. The carrier-pigeon flies his two hundred and fifty miles homeward by eyesight—namely, from point to point of objects which he has marked; but this is only our conjecture. The fierce dragon-fly, with twelve thousand lenses in his eye, darts from angle to angle with the rapidity of a flashing sword, and as rapidly darts back, not turning in the air, but with a dash reversing the action of his four wings, and instantaneously calculating the distance of the objects, or he would dash himself to pieces. But in what conformation of the eye does this consist? No one can answer.

A cloud of ten thousand gnats dance up and down in the sun, the minutest interval between them, yet no one knocks another headlong upon the grass, or breaks a leg or a wing, long and delicate as these are. Suddenly, amidst your admiration of this dance, a peculiar high-shouldered, vicious gnat, with long, pendent nose, darts out of the rising and falling cloud, and settling on your cheek, inserts a poisonous sting. What possessed the little wretch to do this? Did he smell blood in the many dance? No one knows.

A carriage comes suddenly upon a flock of geese on a narrow country road, and drives straight through the middle of them. A goose was never yet fairly run over nor a duck. They are under the very wheels and hoofs, and yet somehow they contrive to flap and waddle off. Habitually stupid, indolent and heavy, they are nevertheless equal to any emergency.

Why does the lonely woodpecker, when he descends his tree and goes to drink, stop several times before he takes his draught? No one knows.

How is it that the species of ant, which is taken in battle by other ants to be made slaves, should be the black, or negro ant? No one knows.

The power of judging of actual danger, and the free and easy boldness which results from it, are by no means uncommon. Many birds seem to have a most correct notion of a gun's range, and while scrupulously careful to keep beyond it, confine their care to this caution, the most obvious resource would be to fly right away out of sight and hearing, which they do not choose to do. And they sometimes appear to make even an ostentatious use of their power, fairly putting their wit and cleverness in antagonism to that of man, for the benefit of their fellows.

We lately read an account, by a naturalist in Brazil, of an expedition he made to one of the islands of the Amazon to shoot spoon-bills, ibises, and other of the magnificent gallatorial birds which were most abundant there. His design was completely baffled, however, by a wretched little sandpiper that preceded him, continually uttering his tell-tale cry, which at once aroused all the birds within hearing. All the day this individual bird continued his self-imposed duty of sentinel to others, effectually preventing the approach of the fowler to the game, and yet managing to keep out of the range of his gun.

## DO YOU LOVE HIM?

You, my dear girl, have a lover, probably. He is generous, gay and handsome, and you never find his society irksome. He acts as if he loves you. Suppose he "declares himself," and asks you to become his wife. Are you prepared to say to him, "I love and will trust you through



life with my happiness, and the lives and weal of our children?" He draws many pretty pictures of the future; but does he work as though he meant to realise them? Do his ambitions and achievements satisfy you? Does his everyday life shine with the noble endeavours of a trustworthy man? If you think and desire a companion in your thinking—one who can unlock the deepest depths of your mind, to what strata of humanity does he belong in the scale of excellence and morality? Is he doing all he can to build up future usefulness and happiness in which you can share and feel blessed. These are questions which the experience of after years make many women weep in bitterness that they were not thought of before answering "Yea." A pleasing exterior is not all that is required in a husband; solid virtues are needed to make the happiness of home.

## TWICE REJECTED;

OR,

### THE NAMELESS ONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Baronet's Son," "Who Did It?" &c., &c.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

The rose is fairest when it's budding new,  
And hope is brightest when it charms from  
tears;

The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew,  
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears.

SOME days had elapsed since Leila Loraine had left her duties at the sick room of Lord Dunallan and encountered her enemy and her lover in the environs of the fair city, and still no tidings had been received by her from friend or foe. She had remained a voluntary prisoner in the establishment, partly from fear of venturing abroad and partly from the desire not to miss the promised interview with Geoffrey Sabine.

At least she would have the comfort of seeing and consulting one in whom she could trust, whom she confessed that she loved with all the fervour of a fresh, girlish affection that was as different to her fancy for Digby Mayfield as was possible for the same species of feeling and sentiment. The one had been the half-unreasoning impulse of extreme youth when brought in contact with a lover approved by her parents and her equal in age and attractions and rank.

Now it was all different. She was thrown on her own resources, independent of all surrounding objects or ties. She had no extraneous attractions to bring lovers or suitors to her side, and it was only real and pure love that could prompt such ties on either side. Yet Geoffrey Sabine was to her the man she would have preferred from the whole world, and if he was to be believed, he looked on her as the woman who of all others commended herself to his tastes and judgment and heart.

It was a real affection on both sides, and so Leila unconsciously, if not avowedly, felt, and it was for that that she waited and prayed and hoped; it was for that she hung upon the faint gleam of brightness that gilded the future, and secretly watched and waited for the promised interview, that might, perhaps, decide in a great measure her future fate. As it happened, there were no fresh cases of sickness that taxed the resources of the establishment, and Leila's strength had been sufficiently tested by her late severe duties as to render it advisable she should have an interval of rest.

Thus a week passed by, and the girl began to think she must, after all, have been mistaken, and that it was only a transient feeling of tenderness that had actuated Geoffrey's conduct, when a clang at the heavy bell of the convent-like mansion sounded promisingly on the silence,

and though such an event was by no means an unusual one in the busy life of the sisters, yet for the hundredth time, perhaps, the orphan's heart beat high, and she waited anxiously for the next moment, which would tell her the result of the application for admittance.

Again and again had she been disappointed, and the domestic's steps had never come near to her room with the request that the signorina would descend to receive the gentleman who had come to visit her. But on this occasion she was not doomed to be silenced with hope deferred. The sister who had charge of the gate suddenly appeared at her door with a look of astonished and awe-stricken importance.

"Oh, do you know, signorina, there is a gentleman wanting to see you, and he says his business is urgent, and that he will not detain you long, only he must see you for a few minutes. I have shown him into the sala, signorina. Will you go?"

"What is he like? Did he give his name?" asked Leila, eagerly.

"No, signorina, he did not. All he said was that he was sure you would see him, and that it was of the greatest importance that he should have a little talk with you. He said he had known you in England, signorina."

It was enough. All this tallied with the experiences of Geoffrey Sabine, and therefore it was with no suspicion or reluctance that the girl, after one hasty glance at her glossy hair, and the simple but becoming robe that belonged to the vocation she had assumed, ran lightly down the marble stairs to the vast sala, that was the refectory and the reception-room of those of the sisterhood who were not engaged in their official duties.

She paused a moment at the door to calm the throb of her heart on the eve of an interview that might well test her powers to the utmost. She guessed pretty well that she would hear a frank and true avowal of love, which she would find most sweet and alluring to hear, and which yet it was her bounden duty to repel and restrain. How could she allow the noble, true-hearted Geoffrey to hamper himself with a portionless, nameless, and perhaps disgraced wife, and in after years to rue the day he had first met her? Never, never should that be.

With a mingled hope and fear Leila opened the door where she expected to encounter the ordeal that might try her firmness to the utmost. Her eyes were downcast as she glided into the spacious apartment, and for a moment she was only conscious that there was a figure which came eagerly forward to meet her as she advanced. Her hand was shyly, half extended toward that which was held out to her, and she listened fearfully and yet eagerly for the first accents of that voice.

But in another instant all had changed. She was conscious that a very different clasp to Geoffrey's Sabine's was round her fingers, and the accents which falteringly yet passionately addressed her had a widely different tone to the rich manliness of the young lawyer's voice. Yet it was refined, mellow, and soft, and it had a winning fascination in its accents as well as words.

"Leila, Leila, can you forgive me?"

She looked up. It was Egbert Dunallan who thus pleadingly and sadly addressed her, and it was no common flattery that his greeting might have exercised on the lonely orphan. The agitated features and the changing, speaking paleness on his cheeks was in its whole aspect a proof that his very heart and soul was wrapped up in the success of his pleading. But Leila had only one idea, one sense in her breast—disappointment and bitter mortification that her hopes should be thus baulked, and that a man who had thus insulted her should dare once more to appear in her presence. She drew herself haughtily up.

"My lord, I have nothing more to say than what has already passed between us. If you repent your insult I am glad. For your own sake and mine I will forgive it; but I have no more to say, and I will hear no more," she added,

haughtily, though a tremor of involuntary repugnance and timid shrinking agitated her slight frame.

She was turning to leave the room, but his voice and his clinging clasp of her reluctant hand detained her.

"No, no, Leila, do not leave me. I implore, I entreat you. Listen but for one moment. I am even now owing my life to your care and tending. I have felt and known ever since I first saw you that you were the only one who could make me happy, that could really win my heart as a woman can and should hold in silken bondage and attractions the heart of the man whose whole life is to be devoted to her. It was this that prompted my offence. I will confess all, Leila. I did shrink, perhaps, from the bold step that I knew was my only honourable course, and I did not absolutely know then that I was perfectly free from other ties. But it is all different now. I have mourned and repented my error, and I have learned to know well and truly my own heart. I can never be happy without you, for you are all that a prince could wish as a jewel in his crown. You have taught me a lesson, fair, noble girl, that I shall never forget. Take me under your noble influence, raise me to yourself, be mine, Leila, mine, and you shall see that I am not altogether unworthy of your confidence."

She gazed at him in bewilderment. Could this be a repetition of the insult, or did he, could he, intend the incredible course of making her his wife, of giving her his coronet, of presenting her to the world as his bride? She opened her lips to speak, but paused. She feared that she would again mistake his meaning, and bring on herself a renewal of that withering insult.

"I do not quite comprehend what you mean," she said; "but I am sure it is impossible. Please do not say any more."

"You do not comprehend?" he said. "Then I will soon make it clear. I ask you to be my wife, my cherished, honoured wife, whom I will present to the world as my choice without a fear of blame or comment. It is enough to see you, sweet Leila, to excuse the madness."

That word woke her from any delusion that might have pervaded her mind at the previous words. It was "madness." That alone should silence any lingering doubt, dismiss any temptation, that for an instant rested on the penitence, lonely orphan's mind. It was alluring, no doubt. A lover and a coronet, a high-born husband and a noble name, a fortune that would once more place her in the station she had once filled, to the refined habits and surroundings that were so great a charm to her. All this was at her command. One word, and it was hers. Again the sound came on her ears like a tempter's spell.

"Leila, I am in earnest; I swear it. I have loved you from the moment I first saw you on that memorable night at the opera. There has been a struggle in my breast between good and evil, the true and the false; but never have I varied in my feelings. Leila, be my own, my better angel."

The girl's tears were flowing now. There was the ring of truth in his voice that could not be mistaken, and she could appreciate the force of the love that thus overleapt all the obstacles that rose between them.

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" she said, in broken accents. "I am sorry I let you say so much. I ought to have stopped you before; but, indeed, indeed, I am very grateful, and it is sweet to think that someone does care for me as you say you do, and can be true and generous enough to forget all that divides us. But still, it is impossible, quite impossible."

"Why? why?" he exclaimed, eagerly. "Do you not believe me? Do you not trust me? Can I not make you happy? Satisfy me, Leila." "Yes, yes. It is not that; but I cannot love you," she said, with a deep blush; "and what is more, you would repent, you would be ashamed of your nameless wife when the first passion was over. It cannot be, Lord Dunallan."

"I would make you love me by my devotion, my love, my tenderness," he pleaded, "and for

the rest I would defy the whole world to make me ashamed of you, my beautiful one."

She shook her head once more.

"No, never. I will not risk it. It would be too late when it was once done, and I could not endure it. It is impossible, dear Lord Dunallan. I will never cease to be grateful to you, to feel deeply interested in your happiness. I will hope and pray you may find someone more worthy of you as I see you now; but I cannot, I will not, be your wife. Do not ask it, my lord; it cannot be."

He perhaps would have lingered yet, he would have pleaded yet more the cause he had so vitally at heart, but at the moment the door opened and the Principal appeared.

"I beg your pardon. I did not know you were still here," she said, with a look that had some reproach in it. "There is an urgent demand for one of my nurses, and, as it happens, the signorina is the only one who is disengaged. Can you be ready in half an hour? A carriage is waiting, and the case is imminent."

"Oh, yes; certainly. In less than that, I was just asking Lord Dunallan to leave," replied Leila, with an emphasis that might well be understood by the young nobleman to convey the death warrant of his hopes.

With a low bow she quitted the room.

"You have still much sickness in the city, I suppose, signorina," he said. "I certainly owe you a deep debt of gratitude for the service I have received from your tending, and the object of my visit was to endeavour to persuade the signorina Leila to accept some reward from me for her zeal and kindness."

"Yes, she is a very skillful and attentive nurse, and we are really sending her to cases that are generally left to older hands on that account. She has been so singularly successful and liked," replied the Principal.

"And is this fresh case an accident," he inquired, with a sort of jealous anxiety as to the next object of Leila's care.

"No, no. It is a case of fever, and a touching one—a newly-married lady just on her wedding tour. But I must ask your lordship to excuse me. I have to send off the signorina with proper instructions, and time is precious;" and the young nobleman was fain to depart at once without another glimpse of Leila Lorraine.

How he loved her now! How the beauty and nobleness and disinterested purity of her character shone out in its brightness and purity before him! How he reproached himself for the insult he had offered her, and mourned over the idea that had he been true and honourable in his suit Leila might have been his.

Perhaps his delicate, feeble health contributed to the remorseful despair by which Leila was more than avenged. In any case he returned to the hotel where his stay had been so terribly prolonged and gave orders to his servant to prepare immediately for departure.

Perhaps had he known the truth as to the new patient who was engrossing Leila's care he might have lingered in torturing suspense, or have hastened from the spot as if driven away by a pestilence, so varied are the phases of human feeling and the operations of the same causes on the human mind.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

For well I know that such had been  
 Thy gentle care for him who now,  
 Unthought, shall quit this mortal scene,  
 Where none regretted him but thou.

"Well, Clara, my cousin, my constant and true betrothed, I am beginning to tire of your delays," said Hugh Lorraine, calmly and quietly, though there was a peculiar expression in his features and a significant tone in his voice that Clara did not fail to notice with some uneasiness in her plotting heart.

The interval that had been asked and granted was indeed drawing to a close, and it was no wonder that the crippled invalid should become impatient of delays that are trying to the strongest and healthiest individuals. Yet Clara was scarcely content with the manner of her

cousin's love. It had less eagerness and passion than befitting an impatient lover, and it behoved her to be cautious in the course she was about to take: one indeed so tortuous and so treacherous that it could scarcely fail to cause constant anxiety and need incessant skill in its prosecution.

"Dear Hugh, the time is not yet quite over. I am so foolishly afraid that I shall be guilty of injuring your health if I allow the excitement too soon," said the young lady, "and it seems to me that you have scarcely gained as much strength as I had hoped lately. You are so easily upset and tired now, dear Hugh."

He sighed wearily as one of the faintnesses that so often prostrated him of late weakened his powers of argument for the moment. In truth, Clara was right. He had gradually but surely declined in strength of late, and the doctor not only acknowledged it, but confessed himself quite unable to pronounce on the cause of the increasing debility.

There was no apparent drain on his strength from any fresh access of the normal malady, and the genial climate had been supposed to check any lingering effect from the accident that had so shaken him. But, still, so it was, though whether Hugh did feel it himself was as yet unknown to those around him, whatever his servant might believe as to his master's real state and the influences acting upon it.

"Yes," said the cripple, bitterly; "you are right, Clara; but then, you know, it is impossible to say what effect the pleasure and excitement of feeling you were my wife might do. In any case I think it would be better to hasten the ceremony. You see, it would entitle you to what fortune I may have to leave should I die before my cousin, and you would be Countess of Deloraine if I were to outlive him. And who knows what might happen? I am a much younger man than he is, you know, and I feel quite confident he will not be Earl of Deloraine many months more."

Clara looked at him with an air of amazement that had almost alarm in it. Was he delirious? Was his weakness affecting his mind?

"My dear Hugh," she said, soothingly, "what can you mean? One would fancy you have some evil design in your brain to talk so of the man to whom you are the next heir."

"Oh, no, not at all. I have no evil design. I would not shorten his life an hour if I could. I do not think such plans as those can at all prosper. They generally recoil on the plotter's head."

"My dear Hugh, what a strange humour you are in," Clara said, in a half reproachful tone; "I think you must be jesting, but in a very bitter way. I do not like it."

"I begin to be afraid there are a great many things you do not like in me, dear," said Hugh, calmly, "but it is for you to speak plainly before it is too late. I will give you one more chance to change your mind, and then you must fix the day for our wedding. That is the decision at which I have arrived, and it is for you to tell me what to expect."

"When do you wish it to be? Will a fortnight hence satisfy you, Hugh?" said Clara with a tone of enforced composure. "I will be ready then, if you are."

"Absolutely—really?" he asked.

"Absolutely and really," she said, with increasing confidence.

"Then there need be no more doubt about it," he said. "I will have all arranged for this day fortnight, eh, Clara?"

She bowed her head in assent.

"That is well settled then," he said, "and my mind will be at ease. And, mind you, there must be no delay—none—no excuses, Clara. I will stand no more. If you are true of heart there will be none, and if not, there will assuredly be most grievous retribution, such as has never yet occurred to you to imagine, that will rain on your head. But I will hope better of you, Clara. I cannot suspect such wickedness of my cousin—my betrothed. Kiss me, Clara. I believe I can test your truth and love by that kiss."

It was indeed a severe trial for the intriguing

spirit of the bride elect. She bore it bravely, however. She once more bent down over the face of her crippled lover and pressed her lips on his brow. There was no shrinking on her part. She laid her lips to his with an unshrinking resolution that did not give him one cause for suspicion and hesitation.

"Now are you satisfied, Hugh?" she said, quietly.

He gave a peculiar smile, and then answered calmly.

"Oh, yes, Clara, quite," he said. "It is not a Judas kiss, I am sure. Yes, it is all right. Let it be as we said."

And Clara retired to her room, and there she cast herself on a chair by the table and leaned her head on her hands.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" she murmured. "It is driving me to extremities. It is hastening matters to a crisis, and who can blame me? No one can be surprised that I am driven in a corner, where I must turn at bay! And yet—and yet it is a terrible ordeal—a fearful crime! Crime? No, no; not so! It is but the workings of fate, the consequences of what might well be expected. And I will dare the worst! Yes, yes, it shall be done!"

There was a fierce resolution in the girl's eyes and manner as she spoke. Then she went to a desk near by, which she opened and examined. A few lines were written, and then she hastily sealed and directed them, and once more returned to Hugh's room and took up her post by his side.

## CHAPTER XXX.

Cease the whisper, Never, never  
 Warm the heart with Ever, ever!  
 Let us, Death, be friends together.

Leila had not even inquired the name of the patient who was to be the next object of her care, nor the nature of the malady. What was it to her? Why should she care as to the result on her own life, or that which was to depend on her care?

It might be, perhaps, that there was some slight excitement, some object in life in this case of those happier than herself, and to whom death presented more terrors. Or else that anything was better than the miserable stray waif existence that was her sole prospect. Did she regret the loss of seeing Geoffrey Sabine, or that she had so firmly rejected the offer of Lord Dunallan?

Certainly not; he last event had in great measure acted on the first, where her mind was concerned. The same miserable feelings that had induced her to refuse Egbert Dunallan actuated her in thinking of Geoffrey Sabine. He was not so exalted in rank; his name was not so widely known, or his race so far descended as to make the stain so obvious or so serious in its consequences.

But it still did weigh with her thus much: she would never bring a stain on an honourable man; or give him one chance to repent his marriage.

Better be wretched. Better let him be wretched than let bitterness or reproach come between them; and thus, lest temptation should step in to overpower her better resolutions, she thankfully and unhesitatingly submitted to the fate that rendered choice impossible, and divided her once more from the only man she had ever really and truly loved. Such were the reflections with which she occupied her mind as she was driven rapidly along to her destination.

It was evidently for some wealthy individual, to judge from the character of the equipage sent, and the extreme rapidity with which she was hurried along.

And the house at which she was bidden to alight had every possible mode of wealth in its belongings, whether or not it was the residence of the invalid and her husband, or merely hired for a time for their temporary residence. But though all spoke of luxury and comfort around, she had nothing to do with it, but the condition of her patient.



And such seemed to be the opinion of those with whom she had to do with on her arrival. There was not a word said, save:

"Ah, this is the nurse. Thank Heaven! Take her to my lady without delay!"

She followed the guide to the sick room. It was large and handsomely furnished, but the venetians were drawn down to exclude the light, and there was a faint odour of sickness, such as is so unmistakable to the watchers by the sufferer from any severe illness. And what was more, there was the distressing moan of the patient in the wide and luxurious bed of sickness, and it might be, death.

She hastily and softly approached the couch, with the cautious, soothing manner in which she had been so carefully trained, and looked eagerly and questioningly on the figure within. It was that of a young and beautiful girl who lay, flushed and tossing, on the pillows, her beautiful eyes glittering, and her cheeks flushed, and her lips quivering with pain and fever. There were all the indications of a severe and dangerous attack of what in England would be termed typhoid fever, but which in Italy is called malaria, and of the most deadly kind. There was but little hope as the girl in her newly-taught wisdom feared.

And it was, and indeed to think of a young and lovely bride, as the Principal had described her, thus stricken down by sickness, snatched from love, joy, wealth, and honour, and laid in the cold, dark grave, where there is no companionship nor sympathy.

Leila at once drew a sort of warning from the touching evidence of the vanity of all human wishes, and also made an earnest and eager determination to use her utmost endeavour to rescue the poor girl from the dark angel of death who overshadowed and threatened her. In a brief space she had assumed her duties, and the tact and savoir faire that is distinctive of the trained nurse were soon felt in the case of the stricken sufferer.

In an exceedingly short time she seemed to gain the confidence of the delirious patient. Calm, soft, and quiet, and yet commanding, she stood at her side, administering the necessary medicine, and applying the remedies that had been hitherto most frantically resisted.

"You must, dear lady; it is necessary; it must be done. It cannot—it will not hurt you," she said, softly.

And the patient gazed eagerly up in her face with a strange, questioning look.

"You would not poison me," she said, in the shrill, feverish tones.

"I would poison myself sooner," said Leila, first gazing down in the glittering eyes, and holding the hands firmly in hers. "Fear nothing; you shall be saved if it be possible that it can be accomplished."

The patient waited a moment as if in grave consideration of the future, and then she drank the physic, and fell back on her pillow in quietness if not slumber. Leila seated herself by her side.

There was some comfort, some use in the constant restlessness being calmed, and she placed herself so that the patient could see her, and if a single gesture required, there might be immediate attention.

She scarcely knew how long this had lasted, when she heard a step approaching from the outer room into which the bedchamber opened, and fearful of her patient being disturbed, she hastily rose and went softly towards the spot to prevent the approach of the new-comer. She had just reached the outer apartment, when the figure appeared in the doorway.

It was that of a tall, slight, handsome man, with features and bearing that she knew but too familiarly and faintly. It was Digby—Lord Mayfield—who stood there, and who for the moment did not recognise her as she glided softly into the shaded room. It was no great wonder if it was not for the moment clear to him who was that fair young creature in her nurse's costume, which at once disguised and yet perhaps more fully displayed her perfect, refined loveliness. But her involuntary start might have

awakened him to an idea of the truth had he not been too much preoccupied to notice it for the instant.

"How is Lady Mayfield? Is she asleep?" he said, softly, as Leila raised her finger to warn him against the least noise that could disturb the patient.

Leila replied in a trembling voice in the affirmative. There was something perhaps that awakened the young marquis to a suspicion of the truth in the tone, or it might be the general air and bearing of the young nurse. He gave a far more conscious start than the girl herself had done as the fact of her identity burst upon him.

In her case there was no doubt, no remorse, no regrets even for the past. Digby had failed in the trial of his love and truth, and it was only the memory of the early girlish views of her youth that gave him any interest in her eyes. Still it was a surprise that could not be altogether ignored, and she stood with a varying colour and timid bearing that gave her a charm all different from that of the unfortunate Agatha in her stately beauty.

"Is it? Can it be? Oh, Leila, have you come to this?" he said, sadly.

"Then it is your wife—it is Lady Mayfield! I am nursing," she inquired, falteringly.

The marquis looked on the exquisite, angel-like face of the simply-dressed girl, that looked so calm and so Madonna-like in its saintly purity, and the old love rushed back on his heart with a something of reverence mingled with it that deepened and purified what was now a useless sin to indulge.

Yes, as he felt what he had lost, as he remembered the troubled, obscure happiness—if happiness it could be called—that had marked his brief married life, he could not but contrast it in and if secret regret with the peace and love that might have made his bliss with the orphan Leila.

Yes, he had soon discovered that Lady Agatha was not the companion for a man's solitary hours, even in a bridal tour. She was distant, fitful, unloving in her whole manner—in the very expression of her face, in the very tone of her voice, and the listless absence of interest or content in her whole air and mien.

In truth Lady Agatha was not happy. The passing pique and flattered ambition and vanity which induced her to throw over Lord Dunallan and accept another suitor had passed away with the news of Egbert's danger—possibly death. And she knew then what she had scarcely realised before—that she had really loved him, and that he had been the sole and true possessor of her proud heart.

The mist had cleared away too late. She was bound now by every law of honour and of womanly decorum to maintain in outward seeming, even if she could not in sincere feeling, her allegiance to her husband, while yet she would have given half her fortune to have freed herself from such irksome bonds.

No wonder then that it had been an embittered honeymoon—one that rather alienated and chilled instead of drawing together the newly married pair. No wonder if Lady Agatha had so far fevered and irritated her young frame as to be liable to the attacks of the insidious malady that is the curse of the fair South.

Such had been the history of the period since the bridal day, when Lady Agatha's healthful constitution had received its first shock, and now the crisis had come, which would either separate the pair for ever or unite them more closely if the sharp lesson was learnt in time. All this had in a measure changed and chilled the feelings of the bridegroom.

And now when Leila appeared to him in her sweet touching tenderness, then the thought rushed with renewed strength on his mind that she was indeed priceless in herself, when silver and gold and ancient birth was but as dross. He answered her question in a tone almost as agitated as her own.

"Leila, Leila, it seems hard and cruel to say it. Thus, when you are winning your living by hard and wearying occupation you so gently

nurtured, so young, and then to tell you—you that the sufferer you are tending is—my—wife. How can I help a terrible fear, a pang of remorse," he went on, bitterly.

"Do not fear, Lord Mayfield," she said, calmly, all the agitation and trouble vanishing from her eyes, and in her voice and manner, "I am quite content that it is so. I have no pang, no jealousy, if that is what you mean. I would not change with Lady Mayfield now; I feel it is far the best."

"Do you mean that? You did not love me—is that it; that it was no grief to you?" he said.

She flushed rapidly with a tide of conscious and maidenly emotion as she replied:

"It is wrong even to think of such things—to speak of them now; but if it will be any surety to you for my care of your wife, be at rest, Lord Mayfield. I feel now that we are not suited for each other, and we might have discovered it too late. Do not speak of the past again; it will drive me from you if you do. I am your wife's nurse, and not the daughter of Lord Deloraine. What was right and flattering then would be an insult now!"

He sighed deeply, convulsively.

"Ah, Leila, perhaps you may console yourself thus. I was the injurer, you the injured; you have proved yourself more than worthy of my love. I have been base and mean and mercenary. Do you really despise and hate me?"

"No, no—indeed, no," she said; "only you must deserve my esteem and trust now. You have a plain duty to your wife; you must be true and loving and devoted to her in her terrible trial, or I shall indeed hate you—despise you, and it may be, leave her and you in this extremity."

"Do you think she will die?" he whispered, so that the patient could not possibly overhear the fatal words.

The girl listened sadly to the troubled, heavy breathing that was becoming each moment more hard and painful, and there was a look of gentle sympathy on her features as she returned:

"I trust not. I will strive all I can to save her, but she is in great danger there is no doubt. You must do your part also when you are needed. Perhaps she may ask for you, and a few minutes' delay will be hurtful."

"Alas, alas! I do not think she cares for me enough," he said, sadly; "but still I will do as you tell me. Only tell me that you forgive me—that you will think of me kindly, pityingly, as one who was once your betrothed husband."

"Yes—yes, I will—I do," she said, moved by his honest, unmitigable misery.

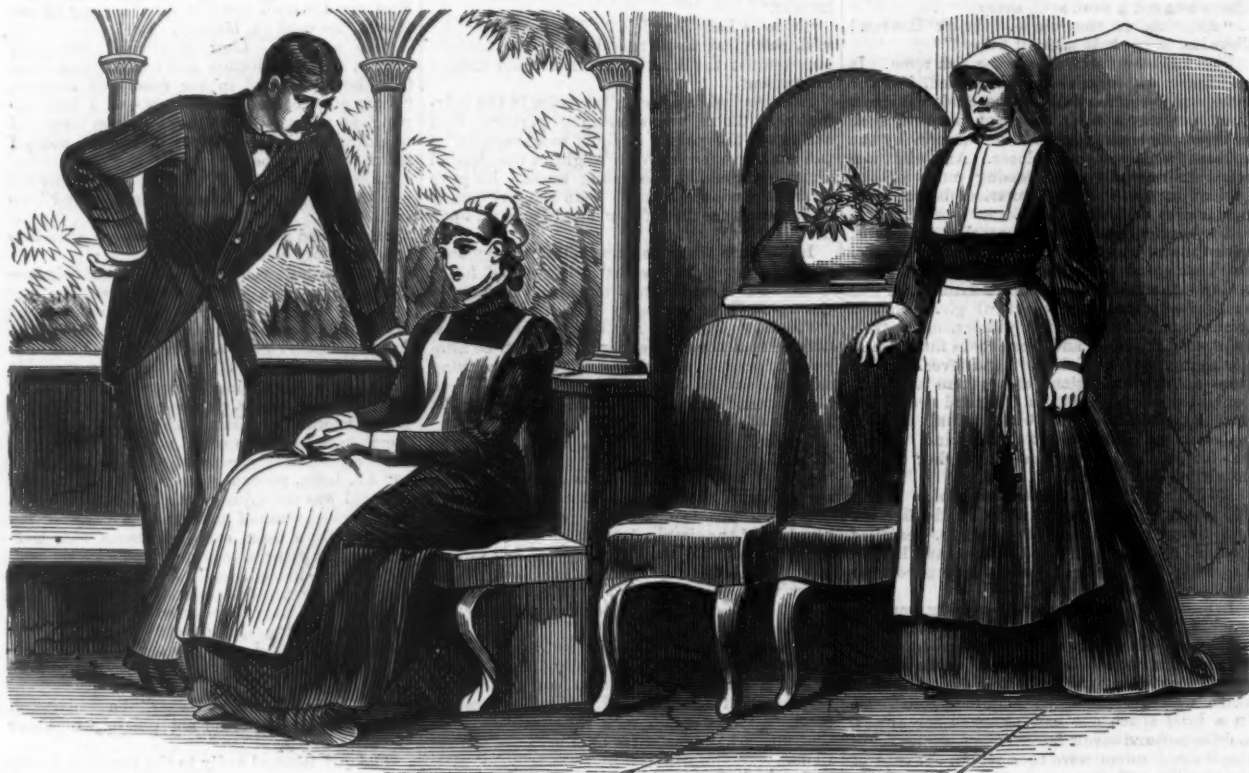
"Now give me your hand once more," he said, "and say 'Digby, I forgive you now and ever.'"

She hesitated for a moment, but it was not in woman's nature to resist such pleading from one who had been weak but not wicked, unequal to the test that a nobler nature would have borne, but still not wantonly fickle and unloving. She held out her hand timidly.

"For the last and only time I will," she said. "Yes, Digby, I do—I will forgive you now and ever!"

He clasped her hand convulsively in his; he raised it suddenly to his lips, and then he dropped it as if it had thrilled a pang through his very frame, and hurried back into the recess of the outer apartment. And Leila glided to the bedside of her patient with a strange feeling of bewilderment at the novelty of the situation.

She, the "Rejected," was the sole hope and the attendant of Digby Mayfield's wife, and as she looked on that young face with its sphinx features and haggard, flushed contour, she offered up a silent prayer that her care might be blessed, and that she might have the comfort of returning good for evil to her faithless lover. And there could be no doubt that in some mode that innocent and unselfish prayer would be answered by the Almighty Disposer of events.



[A PROPOSAL INTERRUPTED.]

A week had passed away, and the disease had run its course, and a terrible and threatening course it had proved. There was only one hope that could be entertained for the recovery of the patient from that wasting and desolating malady, and that was her youth and strength.

Leila listened as the delirium grew more and more ungoverned. She gradually became more sad and impressed by the idea that her recovery was not such an unmingled blessing as might be supposed at a first view of a bride in her honeymoon, loved, rich, and high born.

And also she utterly changed her attempts to retain Lord Mayfield in the sick room in that raging fever. How could she permit him or any one she could prevent to sit at the bedside of a newly-married woman, who called on the name of one who was not her husband, who gave vent to eager and frantic petitions for pardon while confessing her sin of treachery and of piqued feebleness of purpose? Yet so it was. Lady Agatha's restless lips hovered incessantly, in either audible or muttered calls, on one who ought never to have been in her heart or on her tongue.

"Egbert, Egbert, forgive me!" she said, piteously. "Oh, if you could but see me now—if you could but see my heart! I did—I did love you, and yet I killed you by my wretched pride and arrogance."

Alas! alas! It was Lord Dunallan on whom her wandering thoughts ran. It was he who thus haunted her delirious brain, and it told but too plainly the real state of her feelings, the history of the past.

Unloving and unloved. Such was the state of Digby Mayfield. He had not chosen his bride from true and unselfish love, nor had she accepted him as her true and only beloved; and Egbert Dunallan was equally lost in heart and in hand to the unhappy and misguided lady, who was so bitterly punished.

Yes, the Rejected, the Nameless One, could well afford to pity her successful rival, and the lovers who had in turn wooed and yet insulted

her by their love. The one was bound in joyless bonds, the other barely recovering from the terrible risk that had been brought on him through a misplaced and never finished betrothal, and the unfortunate Agatha was also to be pitied in life and death. Better perhaps that she should be taken in her youth and prosperity than to live uncared for in the future. Far, far better so. So reasoned the young nurse sadly and silently as she sat by the side of the patient.

At length the ruthless malady seemed to yield to the very weakness it had induced. Lady Agatha sank into a slumber at the end of those feverish, anxious days, and it was as the doctors had said—one that would either save her or be the forerunner of death. It only lasted but a brief time, however. She woke up with an agonised start and the old wail of:

"Egbert, Egbert, have I killed you? Oh, do not harass me! Do not look at me with that terrible face, that blood-stained figure! Oh, mercy! mercy! I will die, I will die, rather than live like this. Oh, do not curse me!"

Leila took her hand in hers, and looked into her eyes.

"Hush, hush! Listen to me," she said. "He is not dead. He is better. He is well before this."

"Who—who are you talking of?" exclaimed the patient, wildly.

"Of Egbert—Lord Dunallan—who was wounded in a duel. He is perfectly safe, and will live. There is no danger—none. For him all is safe, and he will never need pity more."

Lady Agatha looked eagerly in her face.

"You look true," she said. "Yes, true and good. You would not tell me a falsehood. No, no!"

"Not if my life or yours depended on it," said Leila, firmly.

Lady Agatha gave a deep sigh. Then her head fell back on the cool pillow that the nurse had been arranging for her, and her eyes closed in sleep. Leila watched silently by her. There was hope in that repose. But yet it had not the

rallying softness, the returning health-bloom to the cheeks and lips.

She had become used to the symptoms now that indicated death, and she could not disguise from herself that in this case they were scarcely to be mistaken, but with the hopefulness of her age and temper she would not believe the truth. She hoped on still.

She acted on this hope, and left no engine unturned to restore the patient. She woke the patient at the correct times and administered nourishment and tonics. She bathed the pretty face, she regulated the atmosphere as it should tell best for a convalescent. But all seemed vain.

The pallor increased, the pulse failed, and the breathing became fainter and fainter as the minutes went on, till she began to feel that the crisis was drawing near. Then she rose softly and went towards the door, and beckoned to the pale man that sat there in anxious expectation of the report.

"Come!" she said. "Come. She is dying!"

He turned ashen white. Did a pang shoot through his frame? Was it that he felt that the nurse was all dearer than the patient? Was it that he guessed that he did not hold the first place in the heart of the dying woman. Only Pauline and that fatal newspaper could now give him an idea of the truth—Pauline, who had run away in helpless terror at her lady's danger. He walked like a ghost in the room, and stood by his wife's side.

"Dear Lady Mayfield, here is your husband," said Leila, sadly.

Agatha opened her eyes.

"Digby—Digby, forgive!" she said. "I did not know. I was not false. But it is all over now. Farewell! Farewell!"

She drew his head down with her feeble hands, and pressed his lips to hers, and the breath passed away in the caress. Leila closed the eyes of her rival, and led Lord Mayfield, bewildered and saddened, from the scene.

(To be Continued.)





[SAVED.]

## AILEEN'S LOVE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*"Christine's Revenge; or, O'Hara's Wife,"**"The Mystery of His Love," &c., &c.*

## CHAPTER XVII.

LADY EMILY FAIRLEIGH.

Thou art lovelier than the coming spring  
Or the brightest flowers of spring,  
When the wild bee wanders humming  
Like a blessed fairy thing.      OLD SONG.

THE lady looked at Aileen with her cold grey eyes, and she raised her pencilled brows in a supercilious surprise, and smiled what Aileen, who was sensitive, thought a very cruel smile. Altogether it was a most disagreeable face, handsome as to features and colouring, but hard, haughty, proud, pitiless.

"You Irish peasants," said the lady, with a little bitter laugh, "I think are the most wretched, lazy, rebellious creatures under the sun. It is useless for you to make fine speeches to me; I don't believe in your poetical temperaments, nor in your warm hearts, nor in any of the other fine qualities they attribute to you. Not at all; I think you an idle, lying, dishonest, dirty race of creatures."

Aileen's creamy pallor was dyed with the loveliest pink flush, and her glorious eyes shone with a beautiful indignation.

"Oh, mother dear," cried the lovely, blonde young lady, laughing and showing her white pearly teeth, "you really go too far. This girl is pretty enough for a model for Mr. Millais' 'As bright as a rose and as fresh as a daisy.' That would be a good title for his picture; look at her eyes. Then I am sure she is clean as a pink, except as to shoes, and she can't help that."

"You are a romantic goose, Emily," replied the lady. Then turning to Aileen she said, haughtily: "You might possibly, young woman, be of some service in tracing out for me the thieves who have stolen a box of mine containing precious jewels, for we know this much that the man who stole them took the road towards Clondell, and we are now on his track; he may be a relation or a friend of yours—your uncle or your father. He is a very dreadful-looking old man."

The young lady interrupted the elder one by bursting into another merry laugh.

"My dear, good mother," she said, "I am quite sure no relation of this pretty girl's can be a dreadful looking. Do let me explain things to her, will you? and then if she knows anything at all about it, I feel sure she will tell us the whole truth."

Aileen looked at the lovely girl and said to herself:

"One might love you to madness if one were a man, and even a girl might almost worship you for your smile and your beauty; but would you ever give love in return, sweet lady fair? What makes me feel somehow that you couldn't?"

For this Aileen had the keenest intuitive perceptions. A natural faculty for reading the faces of the men and women whom she met as if they were open books on which the qualities of their souls were written large.

"Now, my good child, look at me, if you please," said the beautiful blonde, with her sunny smile, "and I will tell you who we are and what we have lost. That lady is my mother; she is the Countess of Honeywood, and I am her only child, Emily Fairleigh. We are going to visit at Athlone Castle—at the seat of Lord Clondell."

Lady Emily paused; her perceptions were very quick, and she saw at once that Aileen must know something of Athlone Castle and its inhabitants. However, she said nothing, much as she wondered at the pain that Aileen's sensitive mouth expressed, and at the sudden pallor of her cheeks.

"We have been spending ten days at Sir Mervyn Cawdor's, of Invercrag," continued the beautiful blonde, "and last night, while they were all at dinner, a man came to the side door and asked for charity. Now I had been lying down with a headache, and did not want to dine. I was stealing down the back staircase on my way to the library to get a book—I did not wish to cross the front hall—when I saw this man at the door and heard his loud, begging and pitiful voice. I am a kind-hearted individual, and naturally very fond of poor people."

"I went down and spoke to this wicked old person, whom I found to be a miserable-looking individual, but still I pitied him. I gave him half-a-crown; I took him with me into the library, and made him warm himself before the fire. I left him there while I went to fetch him some wine and sandwiches with my own hands, and when I came back how do you think he had rewarded me? You would never guess: he was gone! My first idea was naturally that he had stolen something, and so true enough he had, though it was a long time before we found out what it was."

"But later in the evening Lady Honeywood, my mother, came to her room, which leads out of mine, and I heard her scream. I rushed in to ask what was the matter, and then I found that a box which contained diamond earrings and a gold locket and chain of my mother's, and three diamond rings, had been stolen. The stairs led from outside the library door straight up into our apartments. Invercrag is the queerest and quaintest old house in the world."

"Of course, the old wretch was the thief, and the first thing we thought of was that he had gone to Loughrea with his ill-gotten gains, so we sent off to the police office there, and we were awake all night with excitement; but this morning we heard that nothing had been seen of the thief at Loughrea, but that some farm-labourer had met him last night walking in the direction of Clondell, whereupon my mother made up her mind to leave Invercrag for Athlone Castle this very morning, and to inquire of

everybody whom she met on the road if they had seen anything of the old man and the box."

Aileen was pale as death. There was more reason for her terror than meets the eyes of the kindly reader of this story as far as they have traced out the fortunes of Aileen Moore. It was not because she knew that poor old Casey was murdered and the jewels had been a second time stolen that she looked in such abject fear up the gloomy mountain road; it was because she saw slowly descending the steep path and approaching her the tall forms of two women.

In a moment she had recognised those two terrible wretches in spite of their long blue cloaks, limy petticoats, and crazy-looking, battered straw bonnets. Scarcely of women, truly, their faces hard, harsh, sun-tanned, clean-shaven.

She knew them at once; she believed that if a hundred years had elapsed since the horrors of the previous night she would still have recognised those two terrible countenances—yes, if it were even possible to live a hundred years of busy life in addition to her own short span of hitherto existence, and during that time never to have seen the faces or the likeness of the two murderers. Mill Wells and Mat Brady—there they were approaching the carriage. Why not point to them? Why not denounce them? Why not say to this haughty Lady Honeywood and her lovely daughter, "Yonder men have stolen the already stolen jewels and murdered the poor old thief?"

Because the road was fearfully lonesome and those two ruffianly men were terribly strong; more than a match for the more delicately reared London coachman and footman of Sir Mervyn Cawdron. Certainly if these ladies would take Aileen into their carriage she would tell them what she knew, but she feared they would not do so.

"If I tell you something, ladies," she began, "may I come into the carriage?"

"Oh, these Irish, these Irish!" cried Lady Honeywood. "What pushing creatures they are. Drive on, Simpson. No, don't ask those wretched women in the road anything; the bare idea of that peasant girl wishing to get into the carriage with me!"

Aileen was in the most mortal terror; it seemed to her that those two terrible men read the secret of her heart, and were coming back to murder her. The carriage dashed on swiftly towards Clondell, a good twelve miles further on as it was, and she was left in the desolate road shivering with her little parcel in her hands.

Imagine a road with a steep mountain on the right hand, bare of all save swampy, sodden turf and great boulder stones, overgrown with the blackest moss; not a stray sheep, not a shepherd's cot in sight. On the left hand an expanse of bog stretching out to meet the dark winding chain of barren mountains, snow on their crests; not a tree, not a habitation, only sullen sky and marshy plain and frowning mountains. And then imagine an unprotected child in this bleak wilderness, with two murderers, red-handed, iron-hearted, with souls that knew not the meaning of prayer or pity or compunction. William Wells was the first to speak; he mimicked the tones of a woman very well, and he cried out:

"My good young girl, can you tell two poor wayfaring women the nearest road to a little inn they call the 'Traveller's Joy'?"

In a moment the meaning of this disguise was revealed to Aileen like an inspiration. She saw that these men had become uneasy regarding herself; that they feared she might have suspicions, or that she might have been disturbed in her sleep, and that she would, if ever she came to hear of the robbery and the murder, associate both with them, and so be the means of bringing them to justice.

And she comprehended that they had returned to seek her out and to kill her if they had the faintest idea that she had the least suspicion of them.

"And now my life depends on my courage and my tact," she said to herself. "The

'Traveller's Joy,'" answered Aileen, with a little laugh; "it's a very nice little inn, and a nice landlady, Mrs. Leary, only I found it rather dear. I paid two-and-sixpence for my tea and bed and breakfast, but I slept well and warm, and I had some cheese and an egg and bread and butter and coffee for my breakfast, but it's rather dear, I think, two-and-sixpence, for a poor girl like me."

She knew perfectly that she must look Wells, the murderer, right in the eyes unfalteringly if she desired that he should spare her life. He must not have the faintest suspicion that she recognised him, so she smiled bravely and looked up into his hideous face.

"We can't give two-and-six, not for women," purred Wells, still mimicking the voice of a woman. "But do you think they would give us some hot milk porridge and let us lie down in a shed on some straw and sleep, for we are dead beat? We have walked all the way from Dublin, and been a week on the way."

"Lean 'tasy if they would or if they wouldn't," Aileen answered, shrewdly, "because I don't know if they have any outhouses or a barn or anything at all of the sort. At the same time, Mrs. Leary seems a kind sort of woman, I should think she wouldn't refuse to give shelter to two poor women such as you are."

Aileen was after all possessed of the highest kind of courage, more especially when we take into consideration the sensitiveness of her nature, the excessive womanly tenderness of her soul, and her great natural shrinking from the sight of pain and suffering. With a truly feminine horror of physical danger, this girl yet possessed one of the bravest hearts. She knew now that her very life depended on her coolness and her daring; it was necessary to look this ruffianly murderer in the face, and to smile a smile of hardihood; it was necessary to appear careless and cheerful, and though Aileen's heart would faint have sunk within her, though she desired to shriek loudly and run swiftly from the presence of these murderers, yet she knew full well that in doing so she would sign her own death warrant, thus, instead of looking on the ground, she contrived to look bravely into that hideous face of Wells.

The other man, Mat Brady, did not attempt to speak, and Aileen perfectly understood the reason why; he had not the gift of mimicry as had the abler scoundrel Wells; he could not talk like a woman, and if he did attempt to speak he knew that his speech would betray him.

"Well," said Aileen, after a pause, "the days are short, and it's a long road to Loughrea, I think I must be wishing you good-day, ma'am."

"Stop!" said the pretended woman, laying a great rough hand on the slight shoulder of the shrinking Aileen. "Stop! We haven't near done with you yet, my pretty one; we want you to tell us all you know about this part of the country and about yourself, and then we'll tell you who we are and what we want."

As the wretch spoke he clutched Aileen's shoulder so roughly that she winced from the pain.

"Oh, please don't, ma'am," she said; "you hurt me so."

The ruffian relaxed his hold. There was a fearful light in his sunken eyes, a grim smile on his ugly mouth. Aileen compelled herself to look into the hideous face as if she did not think it hideous. The nose was broken, the cheeks were bloated, the skin discoloured from bruises received in savage fights; it was a terrible face.

"Don't you wish you was as good-looking a young person as I am?" the wretch asked, with a sneer.

"He suspects that I know he is disguised," Aileen said to herself. "What can I do to make him think that I am simple and ignorant, and do not recognise him? Good looks, ma'am," Aileen answered, demurely, and she looked on the ground as she spoke—"good looks are not the test of character; it is better to be good and honest and ugly than handsome and cruel

and false-hearted, and beauty is but skin deep as we know."

The wretch pushed her from him and indulged in a coarse laugh.

"You speak like a book, little woman," said he, at length; "but now I want to know who you are and where you are going?"

"I am going first to Loughrea, and after that, if I can, I hope to get to London."

"Ah, you would make your fortune there," said Wells. "I am a woman of London, and I could put you up to most of its ways. You ought to go on the stage. I wish I was your mother, wouldn't I make a fortune out of you. Don't go out to service, my dear, or anything of that sort. No, you would be the rage at any London theatre."

"I don't wish to be the rage, ma'am; I wish to earn my bread and do my duty."

"Very pretty doctrines, my dear," said the disguised ruffian, "but I can see you won't be let stop in service long, not you, and now perhaps you have just a stray copper or so to bestow on a couple of poor, friendless, respectable widows whom Providence has reduced to penury. Both our husbands was killed in an explosion in a Welsh colliery, and we was thus forced to cross the sea and tramp about the country seeking a day's work in the harvest time, and now in the winter it's a real hard lines for us, it is indeed."

"Indeed, you came to a poor country when you came to Ireland, ma'am," said Aileen. "And for a copper, I have but two-and-sixpence in the world, and how I am to spare you much of that I don't know; still, ma'am, you shall see what I have, and I will leave it to your kindness to take a little from a poor orphan as you am."

As she spoke she produced her poor little brown purse, and she handed it to Wells, who forthwith opened it and took out a florin and a sixpence.

"You are richer than us," said the wretch, with a scowl, "for you are one and we are two. You have two-and-sixpence, we have nothing. Will you give us the sixpence?"

"Oh, yes," Aileen answered, with a little sigh of something like relief. "You do seem worse off than I am, ma'am, and being a widow in such a dreadful way, one must indeed pity you. I wish I could give you the florin also."

The ruffian returned her the purse and the florin, staring hard at her all the time.

There was something fearfully ominous in the way his lustreless yet cunning eyes scanned the features, the expression of Aileen's beautiful face. Instinct whispered to this fiend in human shape that the girl knew, or at least suspected something.

"This girl is dangerous to us," he said to himself, "and the sooner her tongue is silenced the safer we shall be."

"Who was that fine lady you were talking to just now, my dear?" asked the pretended old woman, with a dreadful smile.

"She is the Countess of Honeywood."

"She was asking the way to Clondell, mayhap," asked Wells, sharply.

"No, she said she had been robbed last night of a box of jewels by a beggar whom she was feeding, and she is very angry with all the Irish people. She heard the man had been seen coming this road, and she asked me if I had seen him or had heard of the robbery."

"And had you?" asked Wells; "had you seen the man. What was he like? Did she say?"

It was always Aileen's theory that to tell the truth whenever it is possible to do so was the best way to help oneself out of difficulty, and she answered:

"They said he was an old bald man."

"And had you seen an old bald man?"

"Yes, at the 'Traveller's Joy' I saw an old man last night, but he seemed half tipsy, not half cunning enough for a thief, I should have thought."

"And were there any other people in the inn?" pursued the ruffian, "because perhaps the jewels are hidden there. Did the people you saw there seem respectable?"



"I did not notice them; I was so tired; I was only in the room a few minutes. I—I—"

She faltered. Those cruel, cunning, lustreless eyes were fastened upon her like the eyes of a wild cat who has sealed the doom of some trembling, fluttering, caged bird, which cannot escape its savage claws. Yes, this wretch read now terror on the white, scared face.

"You are a clever girl," said he, with a grin, "too clever for this world. And so you did not see anybody there at the inn that you would know again, and those you did see seemed rough? Depend upon it that the old man was the thief, and he divided the jewels with the others. If I had been you I would have sent the lady on to the inn to make inquiries."

"Inquiries?" echoed Aileen. "A lady like that go to an inn like that; and when I only know that I saw an old man who was bald at the inn?"

"And you told her that?"

"No, I did not tell her one word. I only listened to what the ladies told me, and I defended my country people whom they abused. But now will you let me wish you good-day, ma'am? The light will soon fade, and I have six good miles to walk before I reach Loughrea."

"We'll turn with you, my dear," the man answered, with a diabolical grin. "As I told you just now, we are but poor wayfaring women seeking a meal for an hour's work wherever we can get it, and so perhaps you may help us to find both if you have friends at Loughrea. We'll walk with you; the road is very lonesome, and we'll be company for one another."

The two dreadful creatures turned and walked with Aileen along the desolate mountain road. She felt that she was their prisoner; she felt that she stood in the deadliest peril of her life; that when night fell and they entered some lonesome gorge of the mountains, they intended to strangle her and throw her dead body into one of the tarns that lay amid the rough hills, sheets of water, black, deep and brackish. This was the miserable fate they had designed for the sweet wild rose—Aileen Moore.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

BARNEY SULLIVAN.

Gay Pat loudly wished them  
"The top of the morning!"  
The curs understood  
All the depths of his scolding.

And yet Aileen walked on without uttering a word in her own self-defence, and she did not object to the proposal of these wretches.

"After all, how can they know that I know so much?" she said to her wildly beating heart. "Ah, if Heaven would only send some honest travellers along this road; if I could but meet Peter Maguire in his mailcart, but alas! he must have passed the turn to the 'Traveller's Joy' long before I started, and he will not pass this way again until these men have murdered me!"

Then she looked eagerly along the lonely road for the sight of a horse or a man with a cart, even a woman or a child, but nothing human met her gaze. It was still daylight, for it was not more than half-past three in the afternoon: The men walked along now in sullen silence.

Aileen lifted up her young heart in prayer. All at once the road wound round into one of those gorges of the hills that suggest the idea of creation before verdure and beauty and life awoke in the earth; those dim days when the Sacred Chronicler tells us that the earth was without form and void.

Dark mountains shut away the sight of the world beyond; a grassy slope swept down from the feet of the travellers to the bleak foot of the opposite hill. In the centre of the grass was a murky pool, deep and sullen. A large raven was fluttering and croaking over it, but at that very moment Aileen heard a loud and hearty laugh, and sharp round the corner of the steep road turned two men.

A rift in a black cloud overhead permitted a sickly gleam of sunshine to fall upon an honest, ruddy face, with a queer turned-up nose, a pair of twinkling eyes, and a tuft of red hair that came low on a broad brow. Then Aileen uttered a scream of joy.

"Barney, Barney, Barney Sullivan, sure my heart is on fire with joy at the sight of you this blessed minnit!"

Poor Aileen had lost all self-command; the terrible excitement of the last few days was telling on her. She rushed up to the pedlar, for she saw in him one who would rescue her from the grave, and from the murderous hands of these terrible men. Who shall picture the wild surprise and consternation that for a time quite transformed the usually comical face of the light-hearted pedlar.

"Aileen, Aileen, agra, is it possible? You here in this lonesome road so far from home, and with these—"

He did not continue his speech; his quick eyes took in far more than his shrewd soul would suffer his glib tongue to reveal. In another moment he had doffed his cap to those two caricatures; those scarecrow imitations of womankind, with their hideous faces, crazy bonnets, long blue cloaks, and linsey skirts.

"The top of the morning to yez, ladies," he said, with an exaggeration of politeness that must have made the ruffians in disguise wonder at his sweet-tempered cheerfulness. "Where may you all be going this bitter cold afternoon; there's a mist creeping over the hills like a thief that comes with the darkness—sly and silent and deadly for those that has weak throats and chests. Yours are none of the strongest, Aileen anoon, as I can tell who have known you from your cradle. Where are you going at all, at all, with these illigant ladies?"

"I was going to Loughrea, but I had rather come with you; that is, I don't like travelling alone on foot at night."

"Then why in the name of the fates and the fairies would you be walking alone in these roads, acushla? Where's Dermot? Not far behind you, I'll warrant me."

Aileen looked sorrowfully on the ground.

"I'll tell you another time," she said, softly.

The companion of Barney Sullivan was a little dark man, with bright black eyes. He wore a suit of shabby corduroys, with grey stockings and thick shoes, a broad-leaved hat very much the worse for wear, and a woollen comforter round his throat.

"Sure, this is Roderick Egan, the landlord of the 'Golden Cow,'" said Barney, "and the 'Golden Cow' isn't a mile from here; you wouldn't think it. It was a quare thing to build a public in a bye lane, but 'twas in the old times before this new road was cut, and it lies convenient for those who is busy at the peat harvest in the autumn; it's little business as Roderick does in the winter in selling beer or giving beds to wayfarers, but he has six cows and a lot of pigs and chickens, and whenever I meet him in Loughrea I always walk back with him to Cavareen, that's the name of his farm, and I sleep the night, and he always treats the missis and the children to some presents out of my pack, for you would be surprised what a lot of money Egan is worth. He has over two hundred pounds in a stocking hid away somewhere in the thatch of the roof, though it would not do, considering Cavareen is such a lonesome spot, to mention that fact except to friends."

If Aileen had not known the extreme shrewdness and caution that tempered the reckless gaiety of the pedlar's disposition, she would have thought him an idiot to talk thus before these terrible-looking people, but she at once and very rightly disbelieved the story of the unexampled prosperity of poor Egan. She felt sure that no stocking with a golden hoard lurked in the thatched roof of his poor home.

As for the disguised ruffians, it seemed as if they swallowed the bait, for they exchanged glances, the meaning of which might be interpreted into an understanding that some night, when Cavareen was unprotected, and its master away at market, they would honour the unprotected wife with a visit, and after murdering

her, search for the wealth hidden in the thatch.

"I should almost think the best thing we can all of us do would be to walk on to your place, Egan, and I am sure your dear wife will be just delighted at the chance of making all these unprotected females comfortable."

Perhaps the man Egan did not know what the pedlar was driving at. It was very certain that he had no wish to take those two horribly suspicious-looking people home with him, but he also knew what a "broth of a boy" Barney was, and he understood that he suspected and detested these wretches as much as he did, so he did not offer any opposition to the proposal of his eccentric friend.

"Are yez willing, ladies honey, to come on wid us to Cavareen and have a bit and a sup and a pipe and a warm by the fire, and a can of potheen, and a warm shake down in a cosy corner? Yez must pardon my rudeness in speaking of pipes to ladies, but the wind is so cowlid and I have known the most illigant ladies at Athenry Fair as was not above taking their pipes and their glasses, glory be to the saints, as innocent as the young lambs in the meadows, and indade it's innocent yez look both of yez, and it's proud I am to make your acquaintance."

The two ruffians exchanged glances, and then Wells spoke in those feminine tones which he had the gift of mimicking so well that Barney was quite puzzled and began to think that after all this wretch was simply an uncouth specimen of womankind, not a disguised burglar as he had at first rightly judged him to be.

"I don't know, sir, but I think you are making game of me and my poor friend, two decent widow women, whom poverty has brought to a sad pass. As for innocence, want and hunger drove that out of we long ago; that's to say, we ain't no better nor no worse than the rest of the world. We only seek a meal's victuals, and most willing we are to turn our hands to any work."

"No doubt," responded the pedlar, with his bland smile.

All this while he had poor Aileen's arm very tightly drawn within his own, and the whole party of five were walking along at a tolerable pace in the opposite direction to Loughrea; that is to say, Aileen found herself retracing her steps in the direction of the "Traveller's Joy." She was puzzled at the conduct of the two ruffians.

Did they suspect that Barney suspected them? She felt sure that they did. Why then did they tacitly accept his invitation to accompany him to the little farm and public-house kept by his friends? Did they really believe the story of the two hundred pounds hidden in the stocking, and did they intend to murder everyone in the house that night?

Aileen dared not speak, dared not ask Barney Sullivan a single question, nor tell him a single thing that she feared. She was weak and spent with long walking and fatigue, and she leaned on the arm of the friendly pedlar, feeling a sense of protection in his presence that comforted and cheered her sinking heart.

At the same time the presence of the two vile wretches who walked along by her side impressed her like the influence of some evil spirits—indeed, there was a something weird and "uncanny" in this walk across those lonely hills in the deepening night shadows.

The moon came up like a pale and melancholy friend watching from a distance through tears, for there was a veil of mist over her face. The tall figures of the disguised ruffians swept along swiftly in silence by her side. Meanwhile, she knew not whither Barney was leading her, nor did she dare to ask.

Barney had left the beaten track, and was leading the way across a path which wound round a hill to the right. Presently they were all walking in a narrow lane, on each side were banks of turf.

"Where is he leading us, at all, all?"

It was Mat Brady who asked this question of his companion ruffian in a whisper.

"I don't know. We shall see presently. This public-house seems long in coming into

sight. I have an idea of striking him on a sudden on the head, and you tackle the other, but wait till we see if this farm is a likely place; you ought to know the country."

"I don't; I'm a man of Tyrone; not of these parts at all."

Silence fell between them.

"Arrah," broke in the cheerful voice of the pedlar. "It's myself never saw ladies step out so nobly as your friends, Aileen. It's proud I am to make their acquaintance, my colleen, for regular high steppers they are, and no mistake."

Just then the moon shone out more brightly for a moment, and Aileen saw the roofs of a tiny village in the hollow below.

"Is that where Cavareen is situated?" asked Wells, in his false voice.

"Och, no; Cavareen is in a lonesomer spot a bit further on, but we must go through Ballysheen; that's the name of this place. There's a great house to the right—Invercrag, and these houses are belonging to Sir Mostyn's estate."

Aileen was much mystified.

"You won't refuse ladies all," cried Barney. "when we come to Ballysheen to stop at the 'Nag's Head' and have a glass of hot whisky punch all round at my expense before we go to Cavareen; the night air is so cowl'd and so damp and so keen?"

"What is he up to?" Wells muttered to his friend.

"I don't know; he's a drunken idiot. Let us take his punch and then get him safe again in the dark. There may be something worth having in his pack, but let us be quiet and civil now."

So the whole party entered the miserable little village of Ballysheen, toiled up the steep, muddy street, and paused before the door of a wretched-looking little public-house. There was a bright light, however, in the front window.

"Come on," said Barney, pleasantly, and he led the way into the mean little inn.

Aileen glanced into a bare, unswept room in which was a slatternly serving girl and a large, bright fire.

"There, go and warm yourself, acushla," cried Barney; "you are shivering, sure. Egan will step in with you, and Molly there will take care of you. I am going to get the whisky with my own hands. Don't be afear'd."

Aileen obeyed mechanically. She found herself seated soon on a wooden bench close to the grateful warmth of the fire, the wild-looking serving girl Molly staring at her in surprise. Egan and the two dangerous wretches stood also within the radius of the heat. Barney was gone to fetch the whisky. And then Aileen heard the tramp of many heavy feet and a few rough commanding voices.

It was all like a dream to the beautiful, bewildered child. The next moment it seemed to her that the room was filled with sturdy policemen, and the two murderers were struggling very frantically with very unequal odds—five to one or so.

Another five minutes and their cloaks and skirts and crazy bonnets were sent flying, and they stood, or rather sat, in the sorry male garments which they had worn the previous night. Two fearful-looking ruffians, handcuffed, with white, savage, awestricken faces. Aileen hid hers in her hands, and wondered how it had all come about. Then she heard the voice of the pedlar:

"Arrah, my ladies, it's proud we Irish would be to make carpets of ourselves for your dainty feet to walk on!"

There entered, to the intense amaze of Aileen, no less a personage than the lovely Lady Emily Fairleigh, the famous society beauty of the last London season!

(To be Continued.)

THE height of ability consists of a knowledge of the value of things.

## A PLEA FOR THE CULTURE OF FERNS.

"THE ferns—why are not they brought into more extended cultivation? Not because there is any disinclination to do so on the part of town dwellers. On the contrary, are the numbers not counted by hundreds of thousands of those who, chained to business in the heart of the great business centres, and consequently kept for many months within city walls, wearily pine for fresh country breezes, and for the free—the delightful, the refreshing green—of the fields and hedgerows? It is probably because they have not given a thought to the beautiful ferns that it has not occurred to them how much more pleasant would be the associations of their dwellings and their places of business, were they to fill up every vacant and available corner with these graceful and elegant plants.

Sometimes, perhaps, it is because the idea of having flowers in sunless corners would be impracticable that the idea of having any substitutes for flowers is abandoned. But ferns will grow where flowering plants would perish. Will it not be admitted, then, that a vast fund of pleasure is here opened up—pleasure which is within the reach of all? When it is remembered how much in this life happiness and misery, comfort and discomfort, depend upon ourselves, and upon acts or habits that are within our control; when it is remembered, too, how easily we accustom ourselves to jog on in a round of monotonous existence, when perhaps a slight, a very slight, attention to the details of enjoyment would furnish us with constant sources of pleasure, it will be allowed that a most important object will be secured if it be found possible successfully to urge that such attention should be given to the subject of which this volume treats.—"The Fern Paradise," by Francis George Heath.

## THE PEARL OF THE OCEAN; OR, THE AVENGERS FOILED.

### CHAPTER II.

"THE Colonel's a little riled, aint he?" said Jerry, looking after his receding figure. "Sorry he's got mad so soon after dinner. I've heard Dr. Phipps say that if a body got mad jest after eating, it was liable to bring on the apoplexie fits. My Uncle Tom died in one, or come so nigh it, that he seed he'd been a sinner, and sent for Elder Flanders to pray with him, but afore he'd got there, Uncle Tom was a sitting up a making nutmegs out of pine chunks, and whistling Old Hundred. Uncle Tom, you see, lived in America, where nutmegs were first invented. He's alive and well now, and made twenty-seven barrels of cider last year, out of ten bushels of apples and the cow-yard pump. Ever drink any?"

"Well, no, I can't say that I ever have," replied Pearl, laughing.

"Never did? Well, now that's curis. Why, marm and the gals don't think nothing of taking down a tumbler full with kian into it, any morning afore breakfast. It's the slickest thing to start the cobwebs out of yer throat! You come over to Lamb's Corner most any day, and I'll give you as much as you can drink, and if the governess ain't a using the old mare for nothing, I'll bring yer home in the yellor waggin."

"Thank you, Mr. Sawyer."

"Don't call me Mr. Sawyer. Call me Jerry. The first is my Sunday go-to-meeting name, and the last is my everyday name. What's your name, now? And where do you live?"

"My name is Pearl Noyes. I live at Captain Noyes'."

"Lard? you do? do ye? Why, I'm well acquainted with the captain. He and me swapped jack knives once, and a grand good trade we made of it; both of us. The knife I got wasn't worth a snap, nor his wasn't neither, and the fun of it was we both knowed it beforehand. Be you his darter?"

"By adoption only."

"Oh, ho! I think I begin to take. You're the little gal that he found a cruising round the equator in a small boat, quite a spell of years ago?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, stand off a bit, and let me look at you. I've heern it said you was real handsome, and report aint fibbed. You're as smart a looking young lady as I've seen for a year. You don't paint, do ye, hay?"

"Not to my knowledge," replied Pearl, highly amused at what she would have called impudence in any other person.

"I'm glad to hear it. I've got mighty suspicious of red cheeks, though, since I kissed the colour all off from Peggy Ann Briggs's cheeks last winter at a kissing party. What was that Colonel Rudolph saying to you, if I may be so bold?"

Pearl blushed.

"Oh, ho! he was making love to ye, was he? Well, I vow to man, I thought so. And you hain't very sweet on him, eh?"

"No, I despise him!"

"Just my way o' thinking. He hain't got an honest eye. If he comes nigh you again, jest you send for me. I'll defend you to the last drop of my blood, though I don't mind confessing that I shall be mighty kearful about spilling the first."

"Thank you, Mr. Sawyer."

"Call me Jerry. That's my name. Oh, here you are at your house."

"Come in, Jerry, and let me introduce you to Mrs. Noyes."

"Obleeged. Think I will. Your marm don't never take lodgers, does she? Ye see, I want to get a place to stop in a spell. I'm a setting up a grocery at Highfield, and I want to lodge somewhere where it's jest far enuff from my bianses for me to stretch my legs a walking. I don't approve of a feller's not stretching his legs now and then."

"Come in, and I will speak to mother about it."

Mrs. Noyes rose at sight of the gaunt-looking stranger, and offered him a seat.

"Mother, this is Mr. Sawyer, from the Corner. The gentleman who is about opening a shop in the village. He wants a lodging."

"Service, marm," said Jerry. "How's your health?"

"I am very well. How do you do?" said Mrs. Noyes.

"Cheerful as a cricket. Think you could put me up a spell? I think you and I and the gal would git along."

Mrs. Noyes considered a moment.

"Yes," she said, "I think I'll take you. Pearl's going to London next week, to be gone two years."

"Mother Maggie! what do you mean?" asked Pearl.

"What I say. I have just had a letter from your father. He has engaged a place, and will be here next Tuesday to go with you. He thinks it is high time your education was attended to."

"Oh, I'm so glad," said Pearl, dancing round the room. "I can learn to play and sing now, can I not?"

"Yes, dear. But oh, Pearl, how can I do without you?"

"Mr. Sawyer will be with you, for I am sure you will take him. And he is a good honest soul, I know, and will be hosts of company for you. I shall feel very safe about you if he is here."

"I'm sure I'm obleeged to ye, Miss Pearl."

So it was decided that Pearl was to go away, and Mrs. Noyes was to take a lodger. A day



before she left Highfield Pearl spent mostly upon the seashore. She went early to the cliff, and indulged in the wild freedom of the place to the fullest extent. She was going where she should have to be prim and precise, and she would have one free day of it before she went. So she lay down on the mossy rocks, and watched the white clouds drift across the sky until her eyes ached; and then she unbound her long hair, and wreathed it with gay asters and flaming golden rod. And then plucking the flowers and the long grasses she wove them into a wreath, and sang softly to herself:

A wreath for my hero, noble and bold,  
I weave him a laurel crown,  
Oh where does he linger so long away?

"He is coming, called a clear voice from the water below, and looking down, Pearl saw a boat sweeping past, containing a young man in the uniform of a naval officer.

He rose in the boat, and lifted his hat, and as he did so, Pearl let fall the wreath, and by some chance it dropped upon his head and rested there.

"Crowned king by the queen of the fairies," cried he, "I ask no more of fate!"

He wrapped something quickly in his handkerchief, and by a dexterous motion tossed it up to her as the boat swept past. Pearl picked it up, unwrapped it, and found a little book of poems, and a card on which was written, "Lieutenant Max Livingstone, H.M. Ship Thunder."

She looked after the boat, but he was too far away to be distinctly visible. But the one glance of his eye which she had caught made the blood rush to her cheek even then. She wanted to stay on the cliffs no longer, so she gathered up her flowers, and went slowly home. That night Captain Hugh came, and the next day Pearl accompanied him to London.

The two years of her school life passed quickly and pleasantly to Pearl Noyes. She had made good use of her advantages prior to going to London, and she was not much behind other young ladies of her age—particularly in the more solid acquirements.

Music she took to naturally, and before she had been under the care of Professor Vernetelli twelve months he pronounced her incapable of learning anything more from him, and for the reason that she was fully his equal.

Once during the time Pearl visited home. She found everything unchanged; Mr. Sawyer still boarded at the cottage, and was as quaint as ever, though he blacked his boots now, and sported a bosom pin as large as a halfpenny.

Mrs. Noyes had little news to tell Pearl, except that she had been "nearly pestered to death by a young sailor fellow," who wanted to be told where a young lady with hair like gold, and beautiful as an angel, could be found.

"He calls himself Max Livingstone," said Mrs. Noyes, plying her darning-needle vigorously on a pair of stockings she was darning for Jerry, "but la! nobody knows if that was it! He's a nice-looking young fellow, though, and uses good language, and said he saw you the day before you went away, Pearl. But I did not tell him where you had gone, because I didn't think it was best to have your studies interfered with by any love-lorn young man with melancholy black eyes and curly hair."

"Quite right, Mother Maggie," Pearl said, kissing her forehead.

But in her secret heart she wished Dame Noyes had told him where she had gone, just to see what would come of it.

Colonel Rudolph was abroad, and it was uncertain when he would return. At the end of two years Pearl came home—an accomplished young lady of sixteen.

Captain Noyes had renovated his cottage for her reception, until it was quite like any modern mansion, with its bay windows and porticoes, and its broad piazza, covered with the vines Jerry had taught to climb there.

Pearl was prepared to be delighted with

everything. The liberty of Highfield was such a relief to the routine of the school, and the fresh sea air was so invigorating, she felt like a new creature.

A few days after her arrival, Pearl's young friend gave a picnic in her honour. It was a very gay affair for Highfield, and just after she came on the ground a friend brought to her a young gentleman in a naval officer's dress. Pearl knew him instantly, even before the name was pronounced.

"Lieutenant Livingstone, Miss Pearl Noyes." She blushed rosily as his hand touched hers. Perhaps she remembered how often her sleep had been full of visions of just such dark deep eyes, set in just such a frank, intelligent face, with its frame of dark curling hair, and its smile like a sun rift in a cloud.

"I have the wreath still," he said, in a low voice, still keeping her hand, "and I cannot express to you how happy I am at meeting the giver."

All day he was by her side, greatly to the disappointment of more than one young gentleman, and exciting the envy of the young ladies, who were ready to die of pique at not receiving any attention from the captivating young officer.

In the rosy twilight, while the round moon was rising out of a sea of purple and gold in the east, Max walked down to the shore to the house of Captain Noyes with Pearl's white hand resting on his arm.

Short as was the time they had been together, they had talked like old friends. He had told her all his history—and indeed there was but little to tell. His parents were dead, and he had neither brother nor sister.

His father had been a Captain in the navy, and Max was borne upon the ocean. He had been in possession of his present commission three years—had sailed all over the ocean, and was expecting promotion at the end of the current year.

And in return for his confidence, Pearl had told him her little romance up to the day when she walked down the shore together through the twilight.

That night Pearl could not sleep. She heard all through the hours of darkness the moaning of the sea. But it was music to her. It spoke to her of him. His ship floated on the bosom of the ocean—like herself he was a child of the sea.

She looked at the hand he had kissed at parting and saw that it was soft and white, and beautiful. And for his sake she was glad. Why for his sake?

In the morning, though she had not slept, she came down with a new light in her eyes, and a softer crimson on her cheeks than Jerry Sawyer had ever seen their before.

"I vow to man, Miss Pearl," said he, laying down his knife and fork, "you've been rubbing your cheeks with mullein leaves! That's what sister Sally allus does to her when she's expecting Tom Jenkins."

"You have a great deal of colour, dear," said Mrs. Noyes, eyeing the young girl closely. "You are sure you don't wear your dresses too tight?"

"Oh, tight lacing never made a girl look like that," remarked Jerry, sententiously. "I knowed a woman once that went to sleep one night, and waked up in the morning to find herself dead as a door-nail from tight lacing. And she was as yellow as a saffron bag in the face allus, and had a nose so sharp it split wind so fine she never knewed when it blowed!"

Max Livingstone came to the cottage of Captain Noyes the next day, and the next—until it became a settled thing that he should drop in every day. At first he always had some trifling excuse. He brought a choice flower for Mrs. Noyes' little conservatory—a new book for Pearl—or he wanted to take a ride on the bay, or a walk over to the Point.

Mrs. Noyes began to look grave, for in spite of her many virtues, the good woman was possessed of some traits which are not generally admired, and ambition that her darling should make a good match was one of them.

Already in her heart she had decided that Pearl must some day be mistress of Rudolph Hall. But like a wise woman, she refrained from making her desire known.

The handsome face of young Livingstone won upon her; she had never seen a young man who pleased her fancy more, but then he was only a poor sailor, and she was sure that, if Pearl had her rights, she was born to the manor.

Max's vacation only covered two weeks, and the first of November his ship was to sail. The night before he would leave, he asked Pearl to walk down to the cliff with him.

It was one of those warm, hazy evenings that sometimes come to us even in drear November—sad, sweet reminders of the delicious evenings of June—with a glory of gold and crimson in the west, and a breath of woodland freshness in the soft south wind.

They sat together in silence, and listened to the beating of the tireless sea on the rocks so far below them. He took her hand in his, and pressed the soft yielding fingers.

"Pearl," he said, for the first time calling her by her first name, "I must leave you now; Highfield clock has struck seven, and at eight I shall be wanted on board my ship. In three months I shall return, and then I shall see you again. Till then, will you think of me sometimes, and—and not forget me until I come back?"

"Yes," she said simply, "I will think of you."

"And I of you always, Pearl. Good-bye."

He put out his hand—imprisoned both of hers—imprisoned her also—and touched her forehead with his lips. That was all, and yet Pearl Noyes felt herself betrothed just as solemnly as if he had placed the ring on her finger which would have bound her to him for weal or woe. Jerry was smoking on the piazza when she came up the steps.

"Well," said he, "it's a fine plan to have two strings to yer bow, Miss Pearl, hain't it?"

"I don't understand you, Jerry."

"Oh, you don't, eh? Well, young Livingstone is gone, but you needn't shore the willow—because t'other one's arriv'."

"Who?"

"Colonel Rudolph."

"No; he has not!" she exclaimed, a shudder going over her in spite of herself.

"Yes, and he's been here inquiring for ye. He is as smart as a dog with two tails, and feels as well as two cats with two tails apiece."

"When did he arrive home?"

"Last night; and Dame Noyes she's awfully tickled up with him. You'd ort to hear her go on."

Pearl slept little that night. Between pleasant thoughts of Max, and disagreeable ones of Colonel Rudolph, she tossed about slumberless until morning. When she went down to breakfast Mrs. Noyes set a splendid bouquet before her.

"From Colonel Rudolph, dear, with his compliments. He regretted not seeing you last night very much, but will do himself the honour to call to-day."

"Colonel Rudolph may save himself the trouble," said Pearl, contemptuously, as she thrust the flowers aside with an air of impatience.

They were surely sweet and beautiful enough to have won her admiration, but their perfume seemed to sicken her. Snow-white camellias, scarlet fuchsias, and rose geranium leaves. Jerry took the vase and thrust his long nose among the blossoms.

"Now, to my mind them's mighty nice," said he, taking a long sniff. "If you don't care for 'em I think I'll take 'em up to my room. They'll scent things up amazing. They beat the merry-golds and corianders in Aunt Sally's back garden up to Lamb's Corner, all holler!"

"You can take them, Jerry; I certainly have no objection," said Pearl, indifferently.

Mrs. Noyes looked grieved, but knew how useless it would be to expostulate. Colonel Rudolph came just after dinner. Pearl was sewing on the verandah. She did not rise to meet him, and no shade or colour swept into her

cheek at his impassioned greeting. He took her passive hands in his, and looked into her eyes with that subtle, magnetic gaze which influenced her so strangely, in spite of herself.

"Pearl," he said, softly, "Pearl, I have come back."

She made no reply.

"Will you not speak to me?"

"How do you do, Colonel Rudolph?"

"Do you care to know?"

"Not particularly."

He laughed.

"You are frank, and I like you for it. I have met with deception enough to know how to value honesty even if it is calculated to wound somewhat my vanity. And you will not say a single kind word to me?"

"I have told you that I have nothing to say."

"Nothing? After two years' absence? That is hard, Pearl, but I have borne things which are still harder to suffer. I can bear this also. Likewise I can wait for what I am sure of. You are to be mine, utterly, some time; you will come to me voluntarily."

She made a gesture of scorn.

"Never!"

"Never is not a long word, Pearl, but it signifies a long time. But it does not frighten me, dear. In some respects I am a very patient man—in others I am fierce and impetuous. But not where you are concerned, Pearl. And, seeing my presence is disagreeable to you, I will bid you good afternoon."

He bowed courteously and went away, leaving Pearl angry with herself for having been so rude to him—angry with him for the haughty coolness with which he had spoken of feeling sure of her.

"Never!" she said under her breath, and setting her white teeth together, "never! I would die first!"

After that, Colonel Rudolph came seldom to the cottage. Sometimes he sent little presents of fruit or flowers, but they were quite as frequently designed for Mrs. Noyes as for Pearl. Sometimes he dropped in of an evening, but he never sought to be alone with Pearl. He chatted with Jerry, whom he seemed to have forgiven, and made himself agreeable to Mrs. Noyes that that good lady's head was completely turned.

When Captain Hugh came home he was captivated with the colonel, and not a little provoked with Pearl for treating him so discourteously. Thus matters stood when, one morning in early winter, Jerry came in with the light of important news on his face.

"What is it, Jerry, asked Pearl, who saw that something had occurred."

"The Roost is took," answered Jerry.

"The Roost took?" cried Mrs. Noyes, stopping suddenly in her perambulating from the kitchen to the pantry outside, "Who's took it? The land of liberty, wonders will never cease: I never expected to live to see the day when any mortal body would dare to go there to live. Why, the place has been unlucky ever since it was built. Old Greaves, that built it, was lost at sea only six months after he had settled his wife in it, and she died there alone of starvation; and Adam Briggs, the miser, who lived there next, was found one morning on the floor of the east room, with his throat cut, and all his money stolen! Goodness, there ain't money enough in England to tempt me to stay a night in that house. They say it's haunted, and I never doubted it. Scores of folks have seen lights, and other supernatural things there, and on stormy nights they say old Briggs can be heard counting his money, as plain as you can hear the crowing of the cocks in the morning. But you didn't tell me who had took it, Mr. Sawyer?"

"No I didn't, because you hain't give me a chance. It's the real Witch of Endor herself, judging from the looks of her. I hain't easily scared, but if I should meet that woman in the woods, I should begin to say my prayers as lively as ever old Marva Higgins said hers in a thunder-shower."

"What is her name?" asked Mrs. Noyes.

"She calls herself Bett Morgan, though that

haint no likelier to be her name than anything else. She's tall and straight as an arrow, and her eyes is black and glittering as a coal, and her hair is white as snow, and she's got a young feller with her that she calls Rob—her son, I reckon—as handsome as a picture, and as hump-backed as he can be without being double."

"Where did they come from?"

"From across the seas. So they say. It's my opinion she's a ginowine witch. I mean to go up there the first chance I git, and have my fortune told. I want to see whether I'm a gwine to marry Mary Jane Muggins, or Judy Ellen Slater."

"The Roost" was a rambling old house which had been built several years before in the very heart of a lonesome heath, by an eccentric old sea captain named Greaves. Why he had located a dwelling there, and why he had christened it by such a name as The Roost no one knew.

As Mrs. Noyes had said, the place had been unlucky. Every one who had occupied it had died an unnatural death, and the man into whose hands it had fallen at the decease of old Adam Briggs had been upon the point of pulling it down as a worthless piece of property, when he had received application to let it to Mrs. Morgan and her son.

He was only too glad to avail himself of the opportunity of getting some income from the place, and the bargain was concluded, without any haggling as to terms.

Of course there was a great deal of curiosity among the villagers to see the tenant of the Roost. Several good ladies formed themselves into a committee of investigation, and called on her, but the doors were fast, and to all their repeated knockings no answer was returned. And still they were well satisfied that the mistress was at home.

Now and then, Rob, Mrs. Morgan's son, rode to Plympton—the nearest town—on an iron-grey pony, and carried home supplies from the grocery, but he was never known to volunteer a word to anybody, and if addressed he replied in as concise terms as possible.

It was evident that the new inhabitants desired no intercourse with their neighbours. And as a natural consequence, people fell to talking severely about them. It was said that the woman was a person of ill repute, and that her boy Rob had noble blood in his veins, though where the report came from no one could have told.

Again, she was believed to be a disciple of the Black Art, and it was rumoured among the superstitious wives of the fishery that she could assume any shape she chose, and that she frequently appeared before their doors in the shape of a black cat, and a white goose.

Others believed she was engaged in the smuggling business, and averred that in the cellars of The Roost were rarer, costlier wines than could be found in all that part of the country.

But to come to the root of the matter, nobody knew anything about Mrs. Morgan, and it was not likely they would gain much knowledge on the subject.

And after awhile people settled down a little, but still Rob never went to town, nor Mrs. Morgan to the hill behind the house for a walk but that it was duly reported, and duly commented upon.

### CHAPTER III.

It was March, but the season was early. Already the violets were beginning to bloom on the sunny hillsides. Jerry brought Pearl a letter from Max Livingstone. Those letters were her life; she looked for them more than she looked for any other occurrence. Tender always—meeting her every requirement—and though they breathed no word of love, she was just as sure he loved her.

It was sunset when she received this one, and she took it out to the cliff to read it all by herself. It was a habit of hers when his letters

came—she seemed to be nearer the writer when alone with what he had written. Max Livingstone had a tender, faithful heart, and his letters were full of the spirit of it.

She read the words over and over again with a sweet happiness in her soul. For he was coming to Highfield very, very soon—and then—could she guess what then? Did her own heart whisper to her what then?

She kissed the written sheet, and pressed it to her bosom. Women in love are the same all the world over. The full moon came up and silvered the folds of her hair, and touched her forehead so whitely that it looked like marble. A strange voice, deep with capabilities of tenderness as well as hatred in its tones, broke the silence.

"Does he write fond things, my fair lady?"

Pearl turned quickly, and confronted a tall figure dressed in black from head to foot. The only gleam of colour about her was the long white hair which hung over her shoulders like a mantle, and the glitter of the fiery eyes like living coals. Pearl rose slowly to her feet, and regarded the stranger with keen scrutiny.

"Madame," she said, "I believe I have not the honour of your acquaintance."

"Well, my dear—what then?" asked the woman, coldly.

"By what right do you intrude upon me thus?"

"I beg pardon. I did not know that anyone had the monopoly of the coast of Highfield. I thought these cliffs and sands were free to any foot that cared to press them."

"You are right," said Pearl. "They are free. Excuse me—but you came upon me so suddenly—"

"Never mind, child. It is not pleasant to be disturbed when one is reading a love letter. Once, I should have been annoyed. Now, I hate all men. There are none true among them; no, not one! Dream on, and hug your blissful visions close—you will awake full soon."

Pearl would have left her then, but she barred the path just as Colonel Rudolph had done once before.

"Do not hasten, my dear; I am a stranger in this place, and as such am entitled to courtesy. None of your proud people have favoured me, and I have sought the acquaintance of none. Do you know who I am?"

"I think you are Mrs. Morgan of The Roost."

"You are correct. They have told you horrible things of me, I'll be bound?"

"I have heard nothing in your favour."

"And you have judged me without knowing me?" The tone of the voice was sad, almost reproachful. A thrill of pity went through Pearl's tender heart.

"I did not say that. I do not think that I have judged you at all. I have not thought of you often enough for that."

"By-and-bye you will think of me."

She spoke in a strangely significant tone, and took Pearl's unresisting hand in hers. The touch thrilled the girl like electricity; she was fascinated yet repelled, and the words of Jerry recurred to her that Bett Morgan was a witch. She snatched her hand away and swept past the woman, but one touch of those long, white fingers on her arm detained her.

"You are Pearl—sometimes called the Pearl of the Ocean, and you live with Hugh Noyes?"

"Yes."

"And you are engaged to a certain Lieutenant Livingstone?"

Pearl blushed hotly under the steady, searching eye of the woman.

"You are impertinent."

"Perhaps. I am not afraid of hard words. I have an interest in you which some time I shall explain. And what of the wealthier lover? What of Colonel Rudolph?"

Pearl deigned no reply, but took the path to the cottage. Bett Morgan followed a little way until the road turned off in the direction of The Roost. Then halting a moment, she said, slowly:

"Pearl of the Ocean, 'the mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small'."



For the present, farewell—I shall see you again.” And wrapping her cloak about her, the strange woman hurried off towards the dreary dwelling she called home.

Two days afterwards, when Pearl went down to the sea at sunset she found Bett Morgan already there. Bett greeted her courteously, and the conversation was of books and the world. Nothing disagreeable. Nothing personal. Bett showed herself travelled, and well read, and she talked unusually well. Pearl listened, in spite of her desire to be repelled.

After a half hour there, Pearl went down to the path to go home, and as before Bett walked beside her, and just as they turned into the highway, Colonel Rudolph and Doctor Smithon rode past.

Rudolph bowed to Pearl. Smithon looked back in surprise, and Pearl blushed with some feeling akin to shame, as she remembered that Bett Morgan was a tainted woman, and it was no credit to a young girl to be seen in her company. And Dr. Smithon was the most confirmed gossip in the place.

Even as she was indulging in these thoughts, the grass beside her crackled beneath a footstep, and turning, she beheld Rob the Hunchback. It was still light enough for him to see distinctly, and he scanned Pearl from head to foot. Then removing his hat, he sank on one knee before her and kissed the hem of her dress with the grace of a prince.

“Mother,” he said, in the sweetest voice Pearl had ever listened to, “I did not know you had power to charm the angels of heaven.”

“Rob, get up, said Bett Morgan, with an air of command. “This is the Pearl of the Ocean.”

A quick gleam of intelligence, followed by a shadow of distress, swept over his strikingly handsome face. He rose to his feet slowly. Pearl bowed to them both, and hurried along the road. Rob stood looking after her—his soul was in his mournful black eyes.

“Mother,” he said; solemnly, “I would die for that girl! and yet I came here to—great heaven!”

“Rob, don’t be a soft-headed idiot! A pretty face has done quick work at turning the brain of one who but a day ago thought himself so strong. Think of the years and their memories which lie between us and the happy past. Think only of the suffering that has been ours, and then let her face win us from our purpose if you dare!”

The dark eyes of the hunchback gleamed, his face reddened, his breath came quick. He lifted his head proudly.

“Mother, am I likely to forget? Do I not carry about with me constantly a reminder powerful enough to prevent me from ever forgetting?” He touched the unsightly hump on his shoulders.

Bett bent over him, and touched her cheek to his. She did not kiss him; women like her, who have forsworn all the world, are not much given to tender caressing, even of their own children.

“Rob, be faithful to me!”

“I am faithful, mother. But she is not the guilty one.”

“Aye; not she—but only through her can the end be accomplished. Remember that.”

The hunchback stood erect, and met the baleful eyes of his mother with steady resolution.

“There shall be no violence used, none! No harm shall come to this Pearl of the Ocean! I swear it!”

“Tush, boy! Who talks of harm as you understand it? It is not necessary to pierce the heart of an enemy with the cold steel.”

“Her heart shall not be touched,” he said, in a low, deep voice—his teeth set, and his small muscular hands showing the veins like knotted cords. You had only to see him then to feel certain that Rob Morgan was not a person to provoke to anger with impunity.

(To Be Continued.)

WHEN gold speaks no reason is of any avail.

## SCIENCE.

### THE USES OF THE POTATOE.

In France the farina is largely used for culinary purposes. The famous gravies, sauces, and soups of France are largely indebted for their excellence to that source, and the bread and pastry equally so, while a great deal of the so-called cognac, imported into England from France, is distilled from the potatoe. Throughout Germany the same uses are common. In Poland the manufacture of spirits from the potatoe is a most extensive trade. “Stettin brandy,” well known in commerce, is largely imported into England, and is sent from thence to many of our foreign possessions as the produce of the grape, and is placed on many a table of England as the same; while the fair ladies of our country perfume themselves with the spirit of potatoe under the designation of eau de Cologne.

But there are other uses which this esculent is turned to abroad. After extracting the farina, the pulp is manufactured into ornamental articles, such as picture frames, snuff boxes, and several descriptions of toys, and the water that runs from it in the process of manufacture is a most valuable scourer.

For perfectly cleansing woollens, and such like articles, it is the housewife’s panacea; and if the washerwoman happens to have chilblains she becomes cured by the operation. Few persons are aware of the great demand for potatoe flour, and of the almost unlimited extent of the market that can be found for this product, which is simply the dry-exposed pulp of the ordinary potatoe—the whiter and more free from black specks the better.

It is used for sizing, and other manufacturing purposes, and by precipitation and with the aid of acids is turned into starch. In Europe it meets with a large and increasing demand in its primitive state, as potatoe flour, and in Lancashire alone 20,000 tons are sold annually, and as many more would be taken if put on the market. When calcined it is used largely for silk dressing and other purposes. At present the quotation for potatoe flour in Liverpool is nearly double that of wheat flour. Consignments to Liverpool are solicited by the brokers there, who promise to take all that can be furnished.

During the Franco-German war the French Government purchased all the farina it could secure and mixed it with wheat flour in “potatoe cakes” for the army. Farina at that time rose to £40 a ton, and even the supply fell far short of the demand. Since then an increased amount of farina has been regularly consumed in France, and farina mills have correspondingly multiplied in that country. The manufacture of potatoe flour is so simple, and the results so methodical, that it requires very little experience to reach a satisfactory issue.

The potatoes are first steeped in water from six to twelve hours to soften the dirt and other matter adhering, after which they are thoroughly washed by mechanical means with the aid of either steam or water power. They are then reduced to a pulp by a rasping or grinding process in a properly constructed mill. A small stream of water is caused to flow on the upper surface of the rasp or grinder, to keep it clean of accumulation of pulp. From the grinder the pulp falls into a washing machine, through which the farina is forced by revolving brushes, the coarser pulp being thrown out at lateral openings. The granules of farina pass into a trough, and are conducted to vats, where the farina is permitted to deposit.

After the proper number of filtrations and depositions have occurred, until the last deposit, which is pure white farina, the latter becomes of sufficient consistency to cut into lumps, and place, either unsupported or in conical wire cases, to dry.

The drying process can be accomplished in a building supplied with shelves, and capable of being heated from deg. 60, at which the farina begins to dry, up to deg. 212, which is as high a temperature as it will require. The heating

apparatus may be such as is most convenient. In Europe the farina is packed in 200 to 212 pound fine sacks, but flour barrels are said to be preferable, as the wood protects it from damage, and allows it to be transported safely to the most distant regions.

A BRISTOL gentleman, who forwarded to the Prince of Wales a specific for the removal of tattoo marks, has received the following letter:—“Mr. Knollys is desired by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to thank Mr. Powell for his communication, and to inform him in reply that there is no truth in the report respecting the two Princes now serving on board H.M.S. Bacchante.”

## FOUR-LEAF CLOVER: THE STORY OF A FLIRTATION.

SHE was not a milkmaid beauty, although she was certainly a maid with a milking-pail when our story opens. She crossed the road in front of the toll-gate, a pail of milk in each hand, crossed the little porch in front of the little house occupied by the toll-keeper, went into the kitchen, where she set down the pails, which her aunt took in charge forthwith, came out of the kitchen again, and stood leaning against the doorpost, fanning herself with her apron.

Her uncle was giving change to a man in a light trotting cart drawn by a fast sorrel mare. The traveller stared at Mollie while Mr. Keeble fumbled in his pockets, and Mollie returned the stare with a sweet, artless smile. She had not learned to discriminate between the boldly admiring and the respectful admiring.

In this case the man was good-looking. Mollie thought him better-looking than he really was. She did not appreciate how much art had done for him. He was what is popularly styled a well-preserved man, whereas Mollie’s prettiness was that of youth at its freshest and unsophisticated. She had eyes as clear as a brook. She had lips as red as cherries, parting when she smiled—which was not seldom—over rows of teeth as bright and as even as the grains of corn when corn is white and young.

Her hair, combed back and plaited down her back, lay in little rings over her forehead. The forms of her face, the slender nose, the delicate chin, were sensitive and refined, and withal her most striking peculiarity was her artlessness, her youthfulness, her bonniness. The man in the trap felt in his pocket.

“May I trouble you to give me a match?” he said.

“Certainly,” Mollie answered, with a quick little inclination of the head.

She ran into the house and returned with a match. She handed it to him, and then, when he struck it, she held up her sun bonnet as a protection against the wind, in the depths of which article of apparel he proceeded to light his cigar. Uncle Keeble stood near. A lot of travellers came by, and he addressed himself to the task of levying toll, leaving Mollie and the stranger alone.

“Going to Lover’s Leap?” inquired Mollie, naming a favourite drive.

The stranger admitted that he was.

“You’ll have a nice drive.”

“Not so pleasant as though I had company, miss.”

“Oh, well, we can’t have everything—we can’t have everything just as we wish.”

“No,” agreed the stranger, gaining courage. “If we could I know a pretty girl I’d ask to go with me.”

“I wonder if she’d go,” laughed Mollie. “Pretty girls can’t always be had for the asking.”

“No; they usually know their value. Well, I must be off if I mean to make that ten miles before dark. I’ll bring you a flower from the



[AN AGREEABLE VISITOR.]

Craga as you won't go with me. Shall you be gone to bed when I come through again?"

"I don't think so. If you're not too late."

He lifted his hat and drove off, leaving Mollie with a sensation of having known him all her life.

"Good-lookin' chap, that ar," said Uncle Keeble, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, after the retreating horse and trap.

"He's what the city folks calls a heavy swell," added Joshua Brown, sauntering upon the scene.

He came up behind the uncle and niece, who were not aware of his approach until he spoke.

"That's you, Mr. Brown," spoke up Mollie, idiomatically, with her usual readiness of speech.

"How's yourself, Joshua?" inquired Uncle Keeble. "Heavy swell, say you? Shouldn't wonder. Lodges at Stearns, I suppose?"

"Yes," Mr. Brown replied. "Been there a day or two. Seems to have his pockets full of money. Most all Stearns' lodgers has left but he. Seems like he sticks. Up here recruiting, he says. Sounds like he was in the military business."

That this was a joke Mr. Brown testified to by digging his friend Mr. Keeble in the ribs. Mr. Keeble was polite enough to laugh, but not as immoderately as Mr. Brown, who laughed long, although not loud. His was more like a prolonged chuckle than any other species of merriment.

"Chairs, Mollie," Mr. Keeble remarked, in the midst of it. "Sit down, Joshua, and light your pipe. We'll have a smoke."

Mollie brought the chairs. Mr. Brown accepted one, and seated himself. He made no motion to relieve Mollie of the task of carrying out the cumbersome articles of furniture, but being seated, he sucked his teeth vociferously, and then inquired:

"How's your health, Mollie?" in a tone in which embarrassment struggled with interest.

"My health's very good, Mr. Brown," rejoined Mollie, with far more ease and unconcern, as she stood leaning against the house. "How's yours?"

"Oh, I'm hearty," Mr. Brown rejoined.

He made no further effort at conversation after this, but he gazed uninterruptedly at Mollie for a quarter of an hour or more. Mollie was nowise abashed. She was accustomed to be stared at, especially by Joshua Brown.

She was perfectly well aware that he was courting her and wanted to marry her. She did not phrase it "was in love with her," as did some of the story-books she had read from time to time. It was difficult to fancy Joshua in love. Perhaps this was because our ideas of this sentiment are conventional ones, and are inseparably associated with manly grace and womanly beauty.

So Mollie gazed out into space with at least well-assumed indifference, and might have so remained indefinitely had not her aunt called

her, "Mollie! Mollie!" which recalled to her the humdrum, every-day fact that she had not washed up the supper dishes yet.

This occupied an hour or more. I rather think she dawdled over the performance. Joshua smoked out his pipe, and changed his position uneasily, and listened and waited, hoping she would come back. But no Mollie appeared. Finally he rose to his feet.

"I must be a movin'," he announced, and went towards the kitchen door.

"Going?" inquired Mollie, in a cheerful tone.

"What's your hurry?"

"It's gettin' on to ten," he explained.

"These bright moonlight nights are deceivin'."

Good-bye.

He sucked his teeth again, more conspicuously than before. She gave him her hand; then he went. Ten o'clock! Someone else ought to be here soon! Presently the wheels sounding upon the road of a carriage coming nearer and nearer. Stopping, Uncle Keeble rose to interview the arrival. But Mollie stepped before him.

"I'll go, uncle."

Yes, it was the good-looking stranger again. Mollie held out her hand mechanically, then drew it back.

"I forgot you paid both ways when you went through before."

But the man in the trap caught her hand—not rudely, but still he caught it.

"There," he said, putting something into it.

"I promised you a flower, but there was not one to be found on the Craga. So I've brought you a four-leaf clover instead. That's for luck. Good-night; my horse won't stand."

He was out of sight in a moment more. Mollie stood looking after him with a sweet, pleased smile on her lips. It had not struck her—as it might have struck a girl in a different station—that he was disrespectful; his off-hand manner put her at her ease.

The impression which he had given her at first of having known him all her life grew upon her. She went indoors, and went upstairs to bed. She lighted her lamp and sat down in front of a little table in her room, to examine her treasure.

Still the same pleased smile on her pretty lips. She took down her Bible, and laid the clover-leaf in it, smoothing out the edges where they had curled up. She had opened the Bible at one of the psalms of thanksgiving. She read it through now, before she closed the book.

"Praise the Lord, Oh, my soul, and forget not all his benefits," she repeated to herself the last thing before she lost consciousness. She fell asleep still smiling.

The next morning she pursued her daily way. It was the day when she was accustomed to scrub down the little house. She pinned up her heavy plaits into a knot at the top of her head, and attired herself in a strange, hideous, huge red oil-cloth apron.

She scrubbed the narrow staircase that led upstairs, the kitchen, the sitting-room. Then she churned a while, relieving her aunt, who made out the bread. Then she pared the potatoes for dinner, humming a little song meanwhile cheerily. She was in the midst of the paring, when a beggar came to the door and asked for food. She put down one knife and took up another, with which she cut ample slices of bread and ham.

The Keebles were not rich, but they never turned away a beggar from their door. Perhaps they might have been richer had this not been their custom. In seeing the beggar off, she looked down the road in the opposite direction; it may be she had an intuition whom she would see coming.

Her new acquaintance advanced at a swinging gait. She noticed that he wore a jaunty brown velvet coat, and that he carried a little cane, with which he switched the air. Mollie stood tranquilly, with her arms folded over her red apron, awaiting him. He approached and held out his hand.

"I'm not fit to shake hands," Mollie de-



murred, giving him hers, nevertheless. "I've been hard at work all day. My hands have been in everything, pretty nigh."

She noticed that his hands were like velvet or satin. They were not as white and well-kept as they were soft; but that Mollie would not be apt to remark.

"So you improve each shining hour, like the little busy bee?"

"There's nothing Mollie can't do," said Aunt Keeble, joining in the conversation from the open kitchen door. "She'll be a treasure to any man as gets her."

"I don't doubt it."

He seated himself leisurely on the bench that ran along the little porch.

"Am I in the way? If not, I'll rest myself."

"Suit yourself, suit yourself. You're not in the way. I'll go right on paring these here potatoes. Mollie has earned a breathing spell; she'll talk to you a short while."

Mollie untied the hideous apron with entire self-possession; next she unpinned the heavy braids and allowed them to fall down her back. Beneath the red apron stood revealed another—a white one—and a nice calico gown.

"I pressed your clover leaf," she stated, composedly.

"Did you?" I am honoured." He pulled out a note-book. "And I made a memorandum of it." He showed her an entry: "Presented a four-leaf clover to Miss—"

"Mollie Keeble—that's my name."

"Indeed? Keeble. Odd, that. You don't know German? Keeble and clover mean the same thing."

"Is that so? Sure enough, that is odd. Yes, that's my name."

"And what might yours be?" spoke up Aunt Keeble, again. In her own way, she was chaperoning the conversation all the while. It struck her that there should be a mutual exchange of names.

He took a card out of his case, crossed the porch, and handed it to Mrs. Keeble. She read it at arm's-length: "I. Warner Morris."

"You be from the city, I reckon?" she commenced; as though this followed as a natural sequence from the fact of a man's having a visiting card.

Mr. Morris said yes, he was from the city—a city, at least—Liverpool.

"Oh!" cried maid and matron, in chorus.

This seemed very far away to them. Their acquaintances came, as a rule, from Sheffield. Mrs. Keeble was so much pleased, either with the card, or with his way of presenting it, or both, that she disappeared into the little house presently, and re-appeared with a goblet of milk. While enjoying this rural hospitality, Mr. Morris invited Mollie to drive with him that afternoon. Mollie flushed with pleasure. But she replied, composedly:

"Thank you. I should like to go. Aunt, can you spare me?"

"Oh, certainly. You'll never be young but once. Go off and enjoy yourself. She knows this country well. There's many a young man comes a sparkin' of Mollie and taking her out a buggy-riding. Ain't that so, Mollie?"

"Oh, not so very many," demurred Mollie, modestly.

"Shall we say six, then?" Mr. Morris remarked, rising.

He went towards the kitchen, goblet in hand, with the evident intention of setting it down himself.

"Permit me," he said, when Mollie endeavoured to take it from him.

This little act struck Mollie as the height of chivalrous politeness. As she watched him walk off down the road, she heaved a sigh.

"He certainly has beautiful manners," she remarked.

She had a beautiful ride, what is more, that evening. I. Warner Morris had certain elements of attractiveness about him that made him a charming companion to a girl like Mollie, to whom his fictitious breeding passed for the real thing, and who was quite carried away by

his stories of the life he had led in town and camp.

He had served during the war, and this gave a spice of adventure and a dash of heroism not only to his narratives but to himself. Mollie listened entranced. She had read a good many story books; she had formed her own ideas of heroic personages; Morris was more like a hero than any actual personage who had ever crossed her path.

He was decidedly good-looking. Mollie called him "grand" in her own mind. He was rather a stout man, with a florid complexion and a reddish moustache. He was becoming bald, but his hair was auburn, too—what there was of it. His teeth were surprisingly good to the casual observer, and quite a triumph of dentistry to those who inspected them more narrowly. He had a ready smile and a ready laugh.

Mollie was surprised to find herself as much at her ease with him as she was on so short an acquaintance. She found herself laughing and talking with the same ease that she used to her country beaux.

Mollie selected their destination. Here they dismounted to see the view, which was very fine from this point. Mr. Morris tied his horse, and found seats for himself and Mollie on stumps of trees. There seated, he began to trill a bright, familiar air. Mollie took it up.

"Ah," he said, "you sing. I wish you would sing that through."

Mollie did not wait to be urged! She laid too little stress upon her voice for that. She began to sing at once. Her companion was positively startled. Her voice rang out so clear, so rich, so full. When she had finished he took off his hat to her.

"I suppose you have no idea at all how well you sing. You have the making of a prima donna."

"Primer what?" asked Mollie.

"A choir leader," supplemented Morris, instantly. "Do you know this?" he continued, singing the first bars of a duet.

She did; and they sang it together. Mollie's colour flamed into her cheeks, and her eyes shone. It was no wonder. Even those who refused to approve of Warner Morris on other grounds, admired his voice. And the two together harmonised perfectly.

Mollie had never before experienced a moment of purer rapture than when she sat by her new friend's side, and they both sang, and a flood of strange, new, untranslatable thoughts swept over her. Music always had "said things" to her, as she had expressed it to herself.

It was now ten times more eloquent than it had ever been before. She was lifted right up into another world. Oh, such a restful world—where she herself even was transformed from a humdrum, commonplace girl into the ideal which she desired to be.

"That was good," she said, simply, however, when the duet was happily ended.

Mollie's gift of expression was but slight. They rode home in the starlight. Mollie appeared to have no qualms about being out late, and Mr. Morris certainly was not disposed to suggest any. On the way home he drove slowly, moreover, so that the expedition was a prolonged one; he sang one song after another for Mollie, introducing to her a world of sentiment and emotion.

He took her through three or four operas in this way, giving her a general idea of the way they were put on the stage, besides. If Mollie had ever heard the quotation, she would undoubtedly have exclaimed, with Miranda:

"Oh, strange new world that hath such people in it."

She breathed a sigh of regret when they reached the toll-gate and her companion lifted her out. It was cruel work going back to everyday life after this. Nevertheless, she went back without a visible misgiving.

Next morning she got up early and milked the cows and cooked the breakfast and washed the dishes. Then she began getting ready the dinner. She was deep in this performance when she heard Morris' charming voice; it was a

deep, mellow voice; no one could deny that, on the porch:

"Can I speak to Miss Mollie a moment?"

Whereat Uncle Keeble called:

"Mollie, Mollie!"

And Mollie came forth. She wore the red apron again, but her plaits hung down her back, and she was as fresh and as smiling as a May morn. She advanced with the brisk, tripping little step which was her own. She took hold of the corners of her apron held far back, and bobbed a bright little curtsy. Morris stood before her hat in hand.

"I came to see—by the way, have you had your breakfast?"

"Oh, yes—in peace."

Morris stared. Mollie's idioms puzzled him occasionally, but he understood the yes, at least.

"I am going to take a walk for my health. Can you go, too? I should be so glad."

"I don't know about that," Mollie began, briskly.

But her aunt interrupted.

"You can go as well as not, Mollie. Don't keep him waiting."

She was undisguisedly pleased with Mr. Morris' attentions; too undisguisedly pleased to prove herself at all an adroit match-maker. While Mollie went for her hat, Mrs. Keeble talked about the girl: her good temper, her deftness. Morris lighted a cigar and listened with interest. Sweet little Mollie! He liked well enough to talk about her at that crisis.

They started off together, Mollie wearing the arch smile which Morris had inseparably associated with her face. She did most of the talking, because he was still smoking, and thus was not conversationally disposed. Once or twice he asked a question, in answering which Mollie expanded into narrative. He inquired about her pursuits and occupations, her pleasures.

"I don't go out much," Mollie told him. "I say this: the way you begin is the way you will end. And I don't fancy the young men up here who want to keep company with me. They are rough like. I'd rather stay at home with aunt. The fact is, I'm too busy to have much time for pleasuring."

Here she stopped short, because the facts in the present case belied her words. What had she been doing but pleasuring during the last twenty-four hours? Morris laughed:

"Unless a poor lonesome traveller comes along, like me, and you take pity on him."

At which sally, Mollie was fain to laugh, too, to hide her embarrassment. Poor little soul, her embarrassment was not very profound, however. She was too unconscious of herself, and too innocent of the construction Morris might put upon her words and glances. She liked him, and she frankly gave him to understand that she did so. He was scarcely flattered; he took such flattery too much for granted for that. He had a very well-defined impression of his own powers of fascination.

During this week he caught himself several times wondering why it was that he liked Mollie so much. She charmed him. Once or twice he fell into a brown study, pondering how she would look in the city among other surroundings. Clothes went so far.

Now, if Mollie were dressed in stylish clothes, she would have a very different air. And how would she impress his acquaintances in town? He had an office in Liverpool. How would his fellow-clerks like her? What would they say of her? Would she strike them as an ignorant, clumsy little rustic? Or would they admire her as he had done? Why should they not indeed? His taste was, to say the least, as good as theirs.

Again, he sang in the choir of a fashionable church. Its devotees considered it the fashionable church. Suppose the service were over and the congregation streaming out; and suppose—ridiculous notion—that Mollie were his wife, and were waiting for him in the vestibule. How would she compare with the other women? Would silk suit her style of beauty as well as calico? Silk? Phew! How would he ever raise the

money to dress his wife? Absurd! Where had his thoughts wandered?"

But, in spite of this protest, back his thoughts wandered to the same theme. Meanwhile, Mollie sat beside him on a log and chattered. He asked her to sing suddenly. She arched her eyebrows, as she was apt to do when a reflective mood overtook her, shook her head, then burst forth into song. He was enchanted.

Whatever the world might find to criticise in Mollie, certainly none could deny the extraordinary charm of her voice. He stared at her, not so much admiring as critical. He was weighing her chances of success as a singer. In a choir, even, a woman with a voice like that need never want for silk dresses. Even a poor man might afford to marry a woman with a voice like that.

On their way home the balance of conversation was reversed. Morris became loquacious. He described his life in town—this person, that person. He began to boast of his grander acquaintances—none of them very grand; but those things are all relative. However, those boastings all fell flat.

Mollie had no ideas of grandeur. Morris himself was the most magnificent personage she had ever seen. If he had only known it, the fact that his acquaintances knew him was a badge of distinction in Mollie's eyes. He himself was her standard of elegance.

Grand as she considered him, however, she was not oppressed by a sense of it in any wise. She was not ashamed of herself, or of her belongings. She hardly realised that there was a high and a low; she simply conceded the fact that the person was a little better off than, or in a different situation from, herself.

She felt no cause to feel in the least ashamed of the dinner which she found was ready on their return to the toll-gate, and to which Aunt Keeble bade their stranger friend. He accepted with alacrity, saying to himself that he would regard the meal as a lunch or a late breakfast. Two-pronged forks, sweet pickles, cabbage, fried ham, apple butter, milk. Everything was spotlessly clean, at all events.

Mollie waited on the table. She performed this office with the most charming mixture of coquetry and business. A stage soubrette might have copied her pretty airs and graces with advantage. She had a face which suited coquetry; its dimples, its arch expression; the pretty droll laugh in the corners of the brown eyes. Morris ate very little dinner, so busy was he watching her.

Aunt Keeble pressed her riands upon him. She was extremely diffuse, and she made a long recital about each article on the table. She described how Mollie and she had manufactured the butter on a certain day; how hot it had been; how neighbours had come in. From this she branched off to relate the histories of these neighbours, and incidentally the histories of their kinsfolk and acquaintance. All this prolonged the meal indefinitely.

When the others were well on their way, Mollie took a seat and ate her dinner. Morris was charmed to observe that she had not a coarse appetite. She ate but sparingly; and he was also charmed to observe that she did not eat with her knife. When the meal was over, Mr. Keeble called their visitor's attention to a coarse towel on a roller behind the door.

"Wipe your hands, if you're a mind," Mrs. Keeble remarked.

Morris gathered that this was the family napkin. He acted upon his hostess' invitation, whereupon the others followed his example. Such happy days as followed! Happy, that is, as far as Mollie was concerned. Mr. Morris came to see her every day, and every day proposed some fresh expedition. He had rather a talent for expeditions: the talent which some people possess, who thrive on excursions and picnics.

He and Mollie would go off for a long afternoon drive and take tea at some wayside inn along the route; or else they would start off immediately after breakfast, and Morris would produce about noon a tempting lunch from a lunch-

box which looked like a knapsack, which they would eat on the stump of a tree or on a rock.

It was one of his amusements to provide viands on these occasions which Mollie had never seen before. It amused him immensely to see her looks of surprise over olives and pickles, sardines, caviare. There was not the least trace of embarrassment in her ignorance. These were all fruits indigenous to Mr. Morris' world. Doubtless he was often equally amazed at the curiosities of cookery included in her aunt's bill of fare.

As for being embarrassed at any matters so purely external as things to eat, to drink, to wear, Mollie had no such thought. She was all gaiety and ease of manner. Hence her manners were above criticism, united as her gaiety was to an instinctive and thorough womanly dignity.

She and Morris became very well acquainted indeed. He smoked and she talked, as I have mentioned already; or else she listened, with eyes and ears both; and he told her as much about himself as he cared to tell. He never told as much as she cared to listen to. Every incident connected with his career was intensely interesting to her.

She listened greedily. She learned that he was a widower. That he had a son. He spoke of the latter always as "my boy," so that Mollie thought of him as a mere lad. In fact, Morris seemed to her a much younger man than he really was. She would have been extremely surprised had anyone told her that Morris was several years older than her own father would have been had he lived.

She was sorry—pained is hardly too strong an expression—to hear of Morris' marriage. She could hardly speak for a moment or two after he told her of it. Then she rallied. Perhaps he had not really cared for his first wife. Mollie wished to believe that he had never cared for any girl until he saw her.

We are telling a plain, unvarnished tale of matters as they actually were. This man had never told this girl that he loved her; but she—poor silly child—believed it without any assurance on his part.

We have spoken above of her womanly dignity. Dear little thing, she proved herself dignified and self-respecting now. Morris had carried on many a flirtation before this; he rather prided himself upon his powers of fascination; but he discovered now that he did not dare so much as put his arm around Mollie's waist, or hold her hand "but so very little longer;" still less, attempt to kiss her pretty red lips.

Mollie could not have kept him at a more respectful distance had she been a duchess. It is needless to say that he liked her all the better for this very reticence.

Time passed. Even the very happiest times must pass. Morris only had a month's leave, to begin with, and he had exhausted one week of it before he and Mollie met. He must go back to work. The night before his departure he was in an exceedingly sentimental mood; he packed his trunk with feelings of positive melancholy.

He almost decided that he would turn farmer and spend the rest of his days in these mountains, hunting and fishing by way of recreation, and cultivating Mollie's musical taste of the long winter evenings. He actually sat down on the side of his bed in the midst of his packing, and debated the question seriously. Would he be satisfied with such a life? He realised that it would be stupid.

But then there was Mollie. Verily Mollie had taken a strong hold upon him. He resumed his packing; but his thoughts flowed in another channel. He resumed the original line of speculation which had occurred to him when he had first been charmed by the pretty toll-gate girl. How would Mollie look in the city? What impression would she make in the city? How would she hold her own? This was a far more practical view of the subject.

When he told Mollie he was going the next

day, her heart stood still. Going? And he had not once said when he was coming back. He had not asked her to marry him! She turned pale—as pale as her apron, and her brown hands twitched nervously. Then she rallied and bit her lips. It came over her that this was the time to prove her pride. Her eyes sparkled and she set her pretty lips. Going! But she would not cry out until he was gone!

"Will you write to me?" Morris asked, bending towards her as they sat on the bench at the toll-gate.

He had decided that it was expedient not to conduct this interview in a more romantic, secluded place. Surroundings were dangerous sometimes; they were an undertow to drag a man out beyond his depth. No. He would be prudent.

Whatever he might decide to do afterwards, he would do nothing rash now. Nevertheless, he inquired of Mollie whether she would write to him, in his most beguiling tones.

"I am not much of a hand at writing letters," Mollie demurred, pulling her apron.

"I shall write to you—and if you don't answer, it will break my heart," Morris murmured.

These were conventional courtesies, according to his creed. A man could do no less than make such speeches when he was talking to a pretty girl who was on the point of crying because he was going to leave her.

"I shall miss you, Mollie. Will you think of me sometimes? You are mixed up in my mind with everything that is rural, truly rural—and—pleasant: cows and clover, and all that."

"Cows and clover! You are laughing at me!" Mollie pouted.

"No, I'm not. Aren't you a clover leaf yourself? Is it any wonder I should like to think of clover? Is it now? Other men wax sentimental over roses and forget-me-nots and daisies. Clover for me!"

"I still have that clover leaf you gave me."

"I should like to have one myself—for luck, you know, little sweetheart. I wish it was light enough to look for one now. But it isn't. Will you send me one? In the first letter you write me? Promise me—you haven't the heart to say no, and I just going away."

"All right," Mollie agreed.

The coaxing tones subdued her. It was quite dark now. His hand sought hers, and she let him hold it. He thought what a hard, firm, working-girl's hand it was. But what a grip there was to it. She had given him proof of this on their expeditions across the mountains, when sometimes she had insisted on climbing in front of him and reaching her hand down to pull him up.

How many months of elegant leisure, how many bottles of glycerine, how many pairs of kid gloves, would it take to soften those hands to any decent civilised state of softness, he wondered.

A waggon appeared. Uncle Keeble had gone down the road to see a neighbour. Mollie was on duty. She went forward with her pretty professional air. Morris rose, and when she came back jingling the pennies in her hand he began to say good-bye.

The tears would not be kept back now. Mollie was positively speechless with sorrow, although she struggled bravely with her emotion. Morris took both her hands in his, stooped down and kissed her on the lips. And that was the end of the first chapter of that love-affair.

The second and concluding chapter was all contained in the correspondence that passed between the two. Morris wrote immediately, and Mollie answered immediately. She also sent the clover leaf, gluing it on the sheet of paper she used. She signed the letter with her full name, underlining the word Keeble, and affixing the leaf directly beneath the word.

She signed all her letters with the same precision; also they all began "Dear Friend," and they all were headed with her post-office address and the exact date. These points had been impressed upon her mind when she had been in-



structed in the art of the polite letter-writer at school.

Morris was less exact. His first letter to be sure was signed, but after that he contented himself with a simple initial letter; sometimes L., sometime W., sometimes M. The first letter was less satisfactory in other respects, however. Decidedly he grew more affectionate as his epistolary ardour increased.

He worked himself up into the orthodox style peculiar to lovers before he had written a dozen letters. Mollie had no cause to complain of the ardour of his expressions. He said everything except the one thing:

"Will you marry me?"

She responded timidly and diffidently. But she responded. Gradually in every letter there came to be an expression of her affection. The letters were very simple, really touching. Did he really care for her? She had been so afraid he did not; she had been afraid to believe he did; she would do her best to make herself good enough for him.

It was well—or shall I take that back, and say it was a pity—she did not see Morris now that he had returned to his old ways. In six months' time he looked back to his infatuation for Mollie as to a ludicrous episode. He considered the letters he wrote her as an excellent joke. He wanted to see how far she would go—how far he could draw her out.

After he had had his laugh out, he would drop her. He would be revenged upon her for having actually half persuaded him that he was in love.

The last letter he wrote to Mollie was concocted between himself and a bosom friend of his who had come in to smoke a cigar in his room after the theatre. Morris told this man the story of his flirtation with the little girl in the mountains, and his friend was highly entertained with the recital.

"Spooney, by Jove! No doubt about it, you were spooney. That's a good joke. Never too old to learn, eh? Let's see the letter."

Morris tossed it over to him. He had been in the midst of writing it when he went to the theatre, and on returning had found it lying half finished on the table. His friend Somers read it with note and comment.

"You lay it on thick, old fellow. Well, so this is the parting? 'Circumstances over which I have no control. Inexorable fate. Cruel restrictions of society.' Well put. 'Therefore I yield to the dictates of duty, and say farewell.' Farewell. How will she take it, do you suppose?"

"She will weep her woman's tears," quoted Morris, conceitedly.

"Farewell. 'H'm, h'm. Let us see. It strikes me you end rather abruptly. Couldn't you tone it down a little? Protest your undying devotion in spite of this inevitable separation. Here's the pen. Let's see how tenderly pathetic you can be."

Morris took the pen and dashed off half a dozen lines more. He quoted largely. He introduced part of a speech he had heard given on the stage that night, and which had brought down the house. He submitted his composition again to Mr. Somers.

"That's better," was the criticism of that gentleman.

Then Morris signed and sealed his epistolary effort; signed it, that is, with his initial, as he had been doing of late. Having accomplished this he breathed a sigh of relief. He felt as though he had accomplished a feat—discharged a duty.

"That's off my mind," he announced, as he lighted a fresh cigar.

(To be Concluded in our Next.)

## FACETIÆ.

### ACCOUNTED FOR.

The Sultan, according to the Constantinople correspondent of the "Journal de Genève," has

three hundred cooks! No wonder, then, that Abdul Hamid has succeeded in "dishing" the British ambassador in such a variety of ways. —Funny Folks.

### JUVENILE PARTIES.

(What they are getting to.)

MADLINE (aged four): "What do you think, Gerald! We're to be fetched from the Browns' at half-past nine! It says so on the card!"

GERALD (aged five): "No!—what a shame! I votes we don't go!"

(Seconded and carried unanimously.)

—Punch.

### THE MAIN CHANCE—AND WHY NOT?

FANCY STATIONER'S DAUGHTER: "Oh, ma! What a sweet valentine he has sent me! Wherever shall I keep it?"

MA: "Keep it? Nonsense! Putt it in the winder!"

—Judy.

### THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE CHAIR.

CHAIRMAN OF HOME-RULE MEETING: "'The chair' will not dispute the point with Mistaer O'Pummel—"

THE O'PUMMEL: "'The chair' had better not, unless he loikes to stip out, and take his coat off!"

(Confusion—Excuse fighting.) —Punch.

### MEETING IT.

GOVERNESS: "Freddy, which is the king of beasts?"

FREDDY: "The elephant, miss."

G.: "No. The animal I allude to is much smaller than the elephant, and more blood-thirsty. It is renowned for the marvellous powers of its legs."

F.: "I know, miss."

G.: "Well?"

F.: "The flea!"

—Funny Folks.

## AS WE HOMEWARD GO.

When the breezes blow lads, when the breezes blow,

Our sails shall catch the wind, lads,

As we homeward go.

Thoughts of home and friends, lads, whom we long to meet;

Sweethearts, too, and wives, lads,

Those we long to greet.

Friends join hands cheerily, voices ring merrily,

Welcome to Jack when he reaches the shore;

Home love shine brightly, sweet sleep give highly

Rest to the tar when his journey is o'er.

When the fierce winds blow, lads, when the fierce winds blow,

We must reef our sails, lads,

As we homeward go.

Tack about and catch, lads, those kind winds that blow;

Do our duty always well, lads,

To both friend and foe.

Kind greetings waiting, fierce winds abating,

Homeward we sail once again with a cheer;

Loving hearts meeting us, kind faces greeting us,

Never may Jack know a sorrow or fear.

O. P.

## STATISTICS.

THE CIVIL SERVICE ESTIMATES.—The Estimates for Civil Services and Revenue Departments for the year ending March 31, 1881, have been issued. Compared with the expenditure under the same heads for the past year they show a net increase of £323,159, of which

£280,220 is in the Estimate for the Civil Services and £42,489 in the Estimate for the Revenue Department. The total Estimate for the Civil Services for 1880—81 is £15,436,442 against £15,155,522 granted last session; and for the Revenue Department £3,158,317 against £3,116,078. The estimated cash extra receipts, £1,499,091 show a decrease of £76,201 as compared with those of last year, £1,575,292.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SAGO MILK.—Take one large spoonful of sago, wash it, and add to it one pint of milk; stir it until it boils, then let it stand half-an-hour to thicken.

TO MAKE LEMON JELLY.—Squeeze the juice from twelve lemons, and add 1 lb. loaf sugar, 2 oz. isinglass. Let it boil twenty minutes; then strain it.

APPLE FRITTERS.—Six tablespoonfuls of flour, one of yeast, to a cupful of new milk; mix the batter stiffish, and over night. The next day, add two well beaten eggs, an ounce of sugar, a little shred suet, two or three chopped apples, a few currants, and a lemon peel; fry, in plenty of clarified dripping, a good brown, and dry. The fritters should be about an inch thick in the middle, thinner at the edges. Sauce, vinegar, sugar, melted butter.

BIRDLIME.—Take any quantity of linseed oil, say half a pint, put it into an old pot, or any vessel that would stand the fire without breaking; the vessel must not be more than one-third full, put it on a slow fire, stir it occasionally until it thickens as much as required; this will be known by cooling the stick in water, and trying it with the fingers. It is best to make it rather harder than for use. It can be brought back to the consistency required with a little Archangeal tar.

MOTH IN FURNITURE.—The pest moth is not so easily removed after taking its lodgings. The best plan is to moisten the under part of the furniture with any of the powerful essential oils. I find turps the best thing out, in fact I always keep a piece of wood moistened in turps in my drawer, also the bottom of my wardrobe. If the smell of turps be objected to after moistening the wood with turps, drop as much Eau de Cologne on the wool. Or the covering may be untacked, which is not much trouble, and some powdered cayenne pepper inserted, also a little crushed camphor.—S.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

The late Mr. John Torr, M.P., who died worth a quarter of a million, bequeaths £10,000 towards founding a Liverpool bishoric.

HER MAJESTY'S Government have given full authority to the National Rifle Association to hold a volunteer review at Brighton on Easter Monday next.

In the gallery of the House of Commons the attempt to establish a telephone in the place of the telegraphic instruments used by the daily papers has again failed.

ATTENTION is called to the fact that by the French Transatlantic Cable messages can be sent at the rate of 6d. per word, while by the English Cable the rate charged is 3s. per word.

MANY persons know it, but some do not, that a pretty and easily grown window plant may be obtained by soaking a round piece of coarse sponge in warm water until it is thoroughly expanded. After squeezing it about half dry, place in the openings millet, red clover, and barley grass seed, rice, and oats. Hang the sponge in a window where the sun shines part of the day, and sprinkle it lightly with water every morning for a week. Soon tender leaves will shoot out, and, growing rapidly, will form a drooping mass of living green. If regularly sprinkled, it will later be dotted with the blossoms of the clover.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**SOMEBODY'S PET.**—1. Seventeen is not too young to become engaged, and it would be quite proper to visit public places of amusement with your sweetheart. 2. Annie, gracious; Elizabeth, the oath of God; Ralph, contracted from Rodolph; Fred, rich in peace.

**ANGEL.**—Sisters are very fond of supererogating one another in men's hearts, but the attempt is often fatal to them. A man may be flattered at the preference shown to him, yet, if he loves, he will not transfer his affection to a forward girl who interferes with the happiness of an elder sister. The best way is to take no notice of your sister's flirtation, and as soon as the novelty is over your lover will return to you with sighs of deepest penitence.

**JANE.**—1. Wash the hands in oatmeal and water, smear them with glycerine at night, and always wear gloves in the street. 2. Ask any bookseller to obtain "Aristotle" for you. It will contain all the information you require.

**NELLIE.**—Write a simple, lady-like note, and request the gentleman to return your letters. In future be careful how you put such nonsense on paper. If you have occasion to write love-letters let them be as full of sentiment and kind feeling as you desire, but avoid "gush."

**GRACE.**—We think not—not under the age of twenty-one. Apply to the solicitor or person who acts for you.

**BLUE JACKET.**—The Datura Stramonium, or thorn apple, is a plant three feet high, growing among rubbish, in vast plains, and possessing extraordinary narcotic powers. It is much employed in medicine as an anodyne and anti-spasmodic, its effects resembling belladonna. In spasmodic asthma, smoking the herb, or inhalation from its infusion in hot water, gives relief; but fatal results have been known from its inhalation.

**CHEMICALS.**—It is a trade secret, therefore we cannot inform you.

**PHIL B.**—We cannot undertake to point out to you a paper the editor of which would print your lucubrations. The usual way is to send the MSS. to an editor, and if accepted, it would be printed in due course.

**M. A. B.**—Biting the finger-nails in children may be checked by placing on the tips of their fingers while asleep a solution of bitter aloes. In adults it is a clinging habit, fostered either by deep thought or spitefulness, and can only be cured by the constant ridicule of friends and acquaintances.

**M. A. P.**—1. Inasmuch as the man who married you committed bigamy, of which the first wife's certificate is documentary evidence, you can prosecute him. But it is not necessary to prosecute him to "make you free," because, the first wife being alive, you are not legally a wife, and therefore entitled only to your maiden name.

**BERTIE.**—The Scotch have a saying that "Leap year was never a sheep year." The extra day that February obtains is apt to create confusion, for those who happen to be born upon it have no real birthday except once in every four years. Amongst superstitious people of all nations, from time immemorial, leap year has been looked upon as an unlucky period.

**A. B.**—Diamonds in their raw state present the appearance of semi-transparent rounded pebbles, covered with a thin, brownish, opaque crust; freed from that coating, they are generally colourless. They are found in a detached state in alluvial deposits, from which they are extracted by washing. They were originally discovered in Bengal, and in the island of Borneo. The most celebrated mines of India were those of Golconda, and Rohilkund, in the Mahratta empire. In 1736 they were found in Brazil, and since that time the mines of Minas Geraes have produced most of the stones that have been imported into Europe.

**A. J.**—Perhaps you refer to the Asylum for Imbecile Children, Darenth, Kent. Offices, 37, Norfolk Street, Strand, W.C.

**A CONSTANT READER.**—1. The following is a receipt for removing superfluous hair, but it requires great care in using it: Powdered quicklime, five parts; hydrosulphate of soda, crystallised, one part; starch, five parts; mix them together with water into a tolerably thick paste, apply to the skin, and leave on for two or three minutes,

then scrape off with a wooden knife. 2. The cost of an ordinary license is £2 2s. 6d.; special, £50. 3. We believe the flask oil (asiald) to be the best.

**FRED, HARRY, and SAM,** three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. Fred is twenty, fair. Harry is twenty-one, dark. Sam is twenty-two, of a loving disposition.

**FORE BARBETTE, HYDRAULIC HAMMER, and SHOT HOIST,** three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. Fore Barbette is twenty-two, light hair, blue eyes, loving. Hydraulic Hammer is twenty-one, dark hair and eyes, fond of music and dancing. Shot Hoist is twenty-four, auburn hair, medium height, and fond of children. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-four.

**DORA and LILY,** two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Dora is twenty-three, dark, fond of dancing. Lily is twenty-one, fond of home and children, fair.

**TOM and HENRY,** two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Tom is twenty-three, dark, medium height, good-looking, and fond of dancing. Henry is twenty-five, fair, of medium height, fond of music, good-looking. Respondents must be fond of home and music, of a loving disposition, and good-tempered.

**PENELOPE W.,** twenty-three, medium height, dark eyes, domesticated, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-seven, tall, good-looking.

**C. L. and H. J. B.,** two seamen in the Royal Navy, wish to correspond with two young ladies. C. L. is twenty, tall, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. H. J. B. is twenty-one, tall, fond of home.

**FRED B.,** loving, fair, light hair, dark eyes, and good-looking, wishes to correspond with a young lady about eighteen with a view to matrimony.

**MARTHA and LILIAN,** two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Martha is nineteen, dark hair and eyes. Lilian is eighteen, golden hair, hazel eyes.

**ANNIE,** twenty-four, dark, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy with a view to matrimony.

## WHEN I THINK OF YOU.

When the stars come brightly peeping  
Out from Heaven's deepest blue—  
When all is calm and silent  
I sit and dream of you.

When days hard strife is ended,  
When we cease from all our toil,  
When the miser hides his treasure,  
And the gainer counts his spoil,

When the soft and gentle moonlight  
Lights the scenes we love to view,  
Then in the dreamy stillness  
I sit and think of you.

Were it not for life's stern duties,  
For the work that I must do,  
I should be an idle dreamer—  
I should ever dream of you.

A. J. G.

**JOHN and SAMUEL,** two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies about eighteen. John is fond of music and dancing, fair, light hair. Samuel has brown hair, blue eyes, fond of children.

**ALICE,** twenty, hazel eyes, fair, loving, medium height, fond of music, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-five, good-looking, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

**MARIA and AMY,** two friends, would like to correspond with two tradesmen. Maria is twenty-three, dark, fond of home and children. Amy is eighteen, fond of music and dancing, fair.

**HENRY and CHARLES,** two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Henry is tall, dark, good-looking, fond of dancing, loving. Charles is tall, light brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children.

**ANNIE C.,** medium height, dark, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-eight, dark, and well-educated.

**CARRIE and BLANCHE,** two friends, would like to correspond with two petty officers in the Royal Navy. Carrie is twenty-one, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home. Blanche is nineteen, fair, medium height, fond of home and music.

**CARMEN and AILEEN,** two friends, wish to correspond with two young men. Carmen is dark, fond of home and music. Aileen is twenty-three, of a loving disposition, good-looking.

**W. T.,** twenty-six, dark, medium height, would like to correspond with a young lady. Respondent must be fair, fond of children.

**CHINA RANGER and CHANNEL GROPER,** two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. China Ranger is twenty-one, medium height, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Channel Groper is nineteen, tall, blue eyes, dark, and fond of music.

**PRIMROSE and VIOLET,** two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Primrose is seventeen, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music. Violet is fair, medium height, loving, blue eyes. Respondents must be about nineteen, tall, dark.

**LILLIE and SALLY,** two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Lillie is nineteen, loving, domesticated, dark. Sally is seventeen, tall, fair, and good-looking.

**EMILY,** twenty-eight, dark, a widow, would like to correspond with a gentleman about thirty-five, in a good position.

**L. C. A.,** twenty-one, medium height, fair, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a young lady residing in Kent.

**LOUIE and OLIVE,** two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Louie is twenty-four, fair, medium height, loving. Olive is tall, fair, auburn hair, grey eyes, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be tall, dark.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

**W. O.** is responded to by—Hard Tack, twenty-two medium height, dark, blue eyes.

**POLLY** by—Not Enough, medium height, hazel eyes, fair.

**FLORRIE** by—Jewel Box, good-looking, medium height, fair, hazel eyes.

**ALICE** by—Tautnip, twenty-one, dark, fond of music and dancing.

**POLLY** by—Leegrip, twenty, of a loving disposition, fond of children.

**HAROLD** by—Jollette C., eighteen, tall, dark, loving.

**W. W. by—**Georgina, good-looking, dark, fond of home and children.

**ALBERT M. by—**Olivia P., eighteen, brown hair, dark eyes, thoroughly domesticated.

**JACK LANDSCAPE** by—Lalla Rookh, nineteen, tall.

**TED** by—Millie, eighteen, dark hair and eyes, loving, fond of dancing.

**HARRY** by—Violet, twenty, dark hair and eyes, medium height, of a loving disposition, and fond of home and children.

**WALTER** by—Mabel, twenty, fair, brown eyes, fond of music and dancing, good-tempered.

**JACK K. by—**D. S., twenty-one, fair, brown eyes.

**L. B. by—**E. W., twenty-one, fair, loving, fond of music and dancing.

**D. T. M. by—**Loving Emily, eighteen, medium height, dark, grey eyes.

**KATE** by—William B., thirty-one.

**W. W. by—**E. J., twenty, of a loving disposition, fair, medium height, blue eyes.

**VIOLET** by—Middle Watch, twenty-two, good-looking, medium height.

**MARY** by—First Watch, twenty-one, tall, fair.

**W. H. D. by—**Rachael, tall, thoroughly domesticated, loving.

**TIM** by—H. D.

**WILLIAM B. by—**Agnes, eighteen, dark, fond of home and music.

**CHARLES S. by—**Annie, seventeen, good-looking, fond of home and music.

**LILIAN** by—A. E., twenty-one, fair, good-looking, and of medium height.

**DAISY** by—Semaphore, twenty-one, fair.

**MOLLY G. by—**Sam, twenty, brown hair, light eyes, fair, fond of children.

**CARRIE** by—Strap, twenty-three, dark, fond of music and dancing, tall.

**AGNES** by—Togie, twenty, medium height, dark, and good-looking.

**FRED** by—Clifford, tall, brown hair, blue eyes.

**TIM** by—Oscar, dark, black hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

**JOHNNY** by—S. T., twenty-four, fond of home, fair, medium height, good-tempered.

**FAT BOY** by—Snowdrop, nineteen, dark hair, blue eyes, domesticated, loving.

**LAURA** by—Fred, nineteen, tall, fair.

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